

Pesikta Rabbati

Discourses for Feasts, Fasts, and Special Sabbaths

(THE FIRST OF TWO VOLUMES)

TRANSLATED FROM THE HEBREW BY

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INTRODUCTION

The reading of Scripture before assemblies in Israel goes all the way back, so tradition asserts, to the days of Moses.¹ Scripture, by which Israel lived, had to be made intelligible to the people who would gather regularly to listen to its being read and interpreted. Such instruction was provided preeminently by Ezra (ca. 458 B.C.E.), who "had set his heart to interpret the Law of the Lord and whose settled purpose it was to teach Israel statutes and ordinances" (Ezra 7:10). Therefore, at a New Year's Day assembly in Jerusalem, Ezra and his associates "read in the Book, in the Law of God, distinctly; and they gave the sense, and caused [the people of Israel] to understand the reading" (Neh. 8:8). "Giving the sense" may have been literal explication of the words of Scripture. "Causing the people to understand" may have been exposition in depth, may have represented an attempt to reveal the great moral and religious truths implicit in the jewel-like words of the Text whose author was God himself.²

For a long time such interpretations, literal and nonliteral alike, exegesis or "homiletical enlargement," as moderns may choose to call them, were handed down by word of mouth. Not until the early centuries of the Common Era were collections of such interpretations of Scripture, or Midrashim, as we designate them, written down. The earliest, arranged according to chapter and verse in Scripture, were in effect running commen-

1. "Moses ordained for Israel that on Sabbaths, festivals, New Moons, and intermediate days of the festivals the Torah be read." See P.Meğ 4:1, 75a; see also Josephus, *Against Apion*, 2.17 (Loeb Classical Library, London and New York, 1926, p. 363); and Acts 15:2.

2. See Shalom Spiegel's Introduction in Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of the Bible*, New York, 1956; Abraham J. Heschel, *Torah min haš-šamayim bē-'ispaqlaryah šel had-dorot*, London and New York, 1962; William G. Braude, "The Relevance of Midrash," *Yearbook of the Central Conference of American Rabbis*, 65 (1955), 133-42; and "Open Thou Mine Eyes," *Central Conference of American Rabbis Journal*, 11 (1963), 44-49.

taries on certain books of the Bible. Other collections, made up of discourses for the regular Sabbaths of the year or of discourses for festal days and special Sabbaths, did not follow the consecutive order of chapter and verse in the Bible but concentrated instead on selected passages in the Biblical lesson for the day. Of these two kinds of discourses, one, intended for the regular Sabbaths of the year, followed the lessons in the three-year cycle during which the entire Pentateuch was read;³ the other, intended for festal days and special Sabbaths, concentrated on passages settled upon as relevant or suitable for such occasions. Usually brief, each such passage was specially designated as the Biblical lesson for the day and was termed a *Piska*⁴ (pl. *Pēsiḳaṭa*). Eventually the term *Piska* was extended to apply to Rabbinic discourse on the Biblical lesson, and *Pēsiḳaṭa* or *Pēsiḳta* was the name given to discourses on the *Piskas* of the year. It is to this kind of Midrashic discourse that the *Pesikta Rabbati* belongs. The name might be translated as "The Long⁵ Anthology of Discourses on the Lessons Designated to Be Read Annually" or "The Long Anthology of Discourses on the Brief Lessons of the Year."

2

The date of the *Pesikta Rabbati*'s compilation in its present form is considered by many scholars to have been the ninth century of the Common Era. A reader's gloss in the text declaring that 777 years had elapsed since the Temple's destruction is the

3. The Pentateuch was divided into either 154 or 175 *ṣedarim*, "lessons for the regular Sabbaths." Unlike passages in Scripture for festal days or special Sabbaths, these passages were read not annually but once every three years.

4. The root *psk* means "to cut into sections" and by extension came to mean "to cut up Scripture into Sections for annual use." *Piṣḳaṭa* would be the correct form of the plural of *Piṣḳa*. See Friedmann's Introduction in his edition of *Pesikta Rabbati*, pp. 25-26; and J. Theodor in *JE*, 8, 550-54, s.v. "Midrash Haggadah."

"The . . . form *hap-Pēsiḳta*, viz. that the so-called *Pēsiḳta* contained sections on the readings that interrupted the regular *ṣedarim*, is apparently the original designation of this Midrashic work." Mann, *The Bible*, 2, 111, n. 124.

5. The term "Long" may serve to indicate that the *Pesikta Rabbati* is longer than the *Pēsiḳta dē-Raḅ Kahāna*, which, to cite an example, has for Hanukkah only one discourse, whereas *Pesikta Rabbati* has eight discourses.

basis for this dating of the text. The date is debatable, as will be shown in section 9, but it is certain that the greatest part of the material in the text goes back to Talmudic times.

The Pesikta Rabbati, as already indicated, was inspired by the Biblical lessons for the New Moon, for feasts, for fasts, and for special Sabbaths in the Jewish year. Hence most of the work consists of a succession of fairly long and closely knit discourses upon themes suggested by, or relevant to, such days.

The development of the ideas in the Piskas, which in all but two instances begin with a quotation from the Biblical lesson for the day,⁶ follows one of five different patterns. In the commonest pattern, the one which gives the Pesikta Rabbati its particular character, the quotation leads to the statement of a problem of religious principle or practice, a problem obliquely set by the quotation and introduced by the phrase *Yēlammēdenu rabbenu*, "Let our master teach us."⁷ An answer to the problem is thereupon given, and generally right after the answer comes a discourse bearing upon the problem. The discourse is that of a Rabbi or a teacher introduced by the formula "Rabbi So-and-so began his discourse." The authors of the discourses were teachers of the second, third, fourth, or fifth generations of Palestinian Amoraim (the 3d and 4th centuries of the Common Era). To each of these Amoraim⁸ is attributed only one discourse. But

6. The two exceptions are Piska 26, which begins with seven lines of verse, and [Piska 53], which is a MS fragment added by Friedmann to his edition of the Pesikta Rabbati.

7. In 30 Piskas: 1-14, 19, 25, 29, 31, 33, 38-45, 47-[49]. In Piska 14, the *Yēlammēdenu rabbenu* formula occurs twice. The formula is ancient. See T. Ber 4:16. See also Epstein, *Kiṭṭe*, 2, 342-51; and Mann, *The Bible*, p. 7.

8. R. Judah bar Naḥman, of the second and third generation (Piska 15.4); R. Jonathan of Beth-Gubrin, of the third generation (Piska 10.6); R. Levi, of the third generation (Piska 15.5); R. Abba bar Kahana, of the third generation ([Piska 51.1]); R. Abin the Levite, of the third and fourth generation ([Piska 49], end); R. Ḥiyya bar Abba, of the fourth generation (Piska 15.3); R. Jonah, of the fourth generation (Piska 15.16); R. Tanḥum of Joppa, of the fifth generation (Piska 17.1); R. Azariah, of the fifth generation (Piska 25.3); our Rabbis of the South, whose time is unspecified (Piska 12.10); an anonymous discourse (Piska 40.3); R. Tanḥuma the son of R. Ḥiyya, whose time is unspecified (Piska 47.2).

to R. Tanḥuma (also cited as R. Tanḥuma Berabbi⁹ and R. Tanḥuma bar Abba—4th century C.E.) who was one of the greatest of all men of Midrash, are attributed no fewer than thirty-eight discourses.¹⁰

In a second and smaller group of Piskas (Piskas 15-18, 32, [51], [52]), the opening quotation from the Biblical lesson for the day is at once set alongside a citation from another passage in Scripture that in wording or in thought appears to be related to it and is therefore, in subsequent commentary, used to extend or deepen the reader's understanding of the original quotation. The commentary that follows on the citation is introduced by the phrase "Rabbi So-and-so taught," or "said," or "stated," or "interpreted," or "commented," or "expounded."¹¹ In this group of Piskas also, the commentary consists not of miniature homilies that move rapidly from theme to theme, as in the Midrash on Psalms for example, but rather of fairly unified expositions of single themes. Like the Amoraim cited in the first group of Piskas, the Amoraim cited at the beginning of the Piskas in this second group were Palestinians who lived in the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era.¹²

Unified exposition of single themes also characterizes the third group of Piskas (Piskas 20-24 and 25), which for the most part is made up of a Midrash on the Ten Commandments (Piskas 20-24). According to Professor Mordecai Margulies, the entire

9. An honorific title for a scholar of great distinction.

10. Piskas 1.1, 2.3, 3.2, 4.2, 5.3, 6.2, 7.2, 8.2, 8.5, 9.2, 10.2, 10.8, 10.9, 10.10, 11.2, 12.2, 12.4, 13.2, 13.5, 14.3, 19.2, 25.2, 29.2, 31.2, 31.9, 33.2, 33.3, 33.4, 33.9, 39.2, 40.2, 41.2, 42.2, 43.2, 44.2, [48.2], [49.2], [49.4].

11. In two Piskas (Piskas 17 and [51]) the second passage is introduced by the formula "Rabbi So-and-so began his discourse." In two other Piskas (Piskas 32 and [52]), though the commentary begins without any reference to authors, it mentions them almost immediately.

12. They included: R. Johanan (Piska 15.1), of the second generation; R. Simon (Piska 16.1), of the second and third generation; R. Benjamin bar Levi (Piska 18.1), of the third generation; R. Abba bar Kahana ([Piska 51.1]), of the third generation; R. Tanḥum of Joppa (Piska 17.1), of the fifth generation; and two introductory comments without reference to authors, whether specified or unspecified (Piskas 32.1, [52.1]).

Midrash on the Ten Commandments, including the moralistic interpretation of the signs in the Zodiac as well as the account of Moses' passage through troops of fiery angels in order to receive the Torah (Piska 20), goes back to the days of the Palestinian Talmud (3d and 4th centuries C.E.).

Unity of exposition is to be found also in the fourth group of Piskas (Piskas 29, 30, 34-37, [50]) which begin with the formula "These words are to be considered in the light of what Isaiah [or Jeremiah, or David, or Solomon] was inspired by the holy spirit to say," a formula followed directly by the question "What did the prophet [or king] mean," or "have in mind, when he spoke this verse?"

A fifth group of Piskas (Piskas 26-27/28, 29/30-29/30B, 46) is also characterized by unified exposition, though the Piskas in this group differ somewhat in their structure from those in the four other groups.¹³

In all the Piskas, each teacher in developing his theme often cites the sayings of earlier teachers in support or illustration of his opinions; frequently these citations embody citations from still earlier teachers. Of the teachers so cited, the earliest are Hillel and Shammai (*ca.* 1st century B.C.E.), whose dicta are quoted on the significance of the offering of "he-lambs of the first year" (Piskas 16.7, [48.3]) and on the way one should prepare for the celebration of the Sabbath (Piska 23.1). Next to them in time comes R. Johanan ben Zakkai (*fl.* 1st century C.E.), whose dicta are quoted on the meaning of the Red Heifer (Piska 14.14) and on why a Hebrew slave who refuses to accept his freedom has his ear pierced (Piska 21.22).

With the exception of a few Rabbis whose country of origin cannot be determined, and of a few who were both Babylonian

13. Piska 26 is almost straight narrative. Piska 27, introduced by "Scripture says"; Piskas 27/28, 29/30A, 29/30B, introduced by "These words are to be considered"; and Piska 29/30, introduced by "It is written," all begin with no reference to authors. Piska 46, rather loose in structure, is a later addition. On the scheme of classifying the Piskas in the *Pesikta Rabbati*, see Albeck's addendum in Zunz, *had-Dérašot*, p. 120.

and Palestinian, the overwhelming majority of teachers whom the Pesikta Rabbati cites by name were Palestinians. No teachers of the post-Talmudic period are cited by name.¹⁴

3

Besides homiletical discourses attributed to many Palestinian Rabbis, Pesikta Rabbati gives us numerous items about the lives and personalities of these Rabbis and of people associated with them. Such items, often moving and dramatic, sound an intimate human note amidst the solemn discourse of the Piskas. For example, Hillel and Shammai (1st century B.C.E.) had special ways of preparing for the Sabbath (Piska 23.1). King Monbaz (1st century C.E.) gave his money to the poor (Piska 25.2). R. Johanan ben Zakkai (1st century C.E.) used to wear his tefillin at all times (Piska 22.5). R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanus (ca. 80-120), a descendant of Moses (Piska 14.13), explained why circumcision was not included among the Ten Commandments (Piska 23.4). R. Joshua ben Hananiah discussed the Ten Commandments with Emperor Hadrian (Piska 21.2/3); R. 'Aqiba (ca. 120-140) debated with Tinneus Rufus the importance of the Sabbath (Piska 23.8); Dama ben Netina, a Gentile, honored his father in a striking way (Piska 23/24.2); R. Simeon ben Yoḥai restrained his mother from indulging in too much talk on the Sabbath (Piska 23.3); R. Jose ben Ḥalafta (140-165) explained to a heathen why sacrifices to be used as congregational offerings could not be accepted from him ([Piska 48.1]). Rabbi Judah (ca. 165-200) explained to Emperor Antoninus why cold dishes on Sabbaths taste better than hot dishes on weekdays (Piska 23.8). R. Ḥiyya and R. Nathan considered what blessing is appropriate when one is walking through a cemetery (Piska 12.1). The prophet Elijah showed R. Joshua ben Levi (3d century) the stones of chalcedony with which the Temple is to be rebuilt (Piska 32.3/4). R. Johanan (d. 279) sold all his property in order to de-

14. The argument that "our holy Rabbi," referred to in Piska 46.2 in connection with the questions put to him in writing, was a Gaonic authority is not conclusive. "Our holy Rabbi" may have been Rabbi Judah.

vote himself entirely to the study of Torah ([Piska 51.1]). The mother of R. Tanḥum, son of R. Ḥiyya (4th century), used to buy two pounds of meat on her son's account, one for him and one for the poor ([Piska 52.3]). Abba Hoshaia's bier was seen flying through the air ([Piska 51.1]).

4

In addition to giving us items such as the foregoing, *Pesikta Rabbati* alludes to events in Jewish Biblical and post-Biblical history and legend. We are told, for example, that an abundance of crops such as the Land of Israel had not produced in all the previous years of the world's existence was produced in the year before the children of Israel were supposed to come into the Land, and was likewise produced in the year that they were banished from the Land (Piska 27.1). We are told that Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah swear by a Scroll of the Law laid upon Zedekiah's knees that he would not rebel against him (Piska 26.3). We are given vivid accounts of Jeremiah's imprisonment during the siege of Jerusalem and of the famine endured by Jerusalem's inhabitants. We are told how the priests and the Levites let themselves fall into the flames of the burning Temple and how Zedekiah was forced into an oven of brass and taken to Babylon (Piska 26.4-6). We are told how Jeremiah sought to lighten the yoke for the exiles (Piska 29.3).

Of Alexander of Macedon it is said that whenever he saw Simeon the Just he would stand up and say "Blessed is the God of Simeon the Just" (Piska 14.15), but that generally the decrees of the Greeks were darkly cruel (Piska 33.6). We are told how the Hasmoneans, upon entering the defiled Temple, managed to rekindle its lamps in undefiled rods of iron (Piska 2.1).

During the Roman siege of Jerusalem the famine was such that Miriam, the daughter of wealthy Nakdimon, was reduced to picking bran and barley out of the dung of cattle; and we have a striking picture of Abikah the son of Gabyati fighting valiantly in Jerusalem's defense (Piska 29/30B.4). During the persecution

by Hadrian, Miriam, daughter of Tanhum, gave up the lives of her seven children rather than have them bow down to an idol (Piska 43.4). It is intimated that Simon bar Koseba may have been slain by his fellow Jews who afterwards brought his head to Hadrian (Piska 30.3). We are told of the twenty-four communal councils in the South destroyed by the Romans (Piska 22.6) and of Rome's confiscatory taxes (Piska 10.1), of Gallus' destruction of Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Lydda in 351-52 (Piska 8.3), and of the sad poverty in Beth Badiah (Piska 23.1). The activities of the Mourners for Zion (Piska 34.1-2), and of the king of Persia who made war against a king of Arabia (Piska 36.2), are also mentioned.

5

Through a medley of fable and legend as well as authentic tradition, the *Pesikta Rabbati* both enriches and enlarges upon Biblical narrative. Of Adam, for example, we are told a good many more things than Genesis tells us. Thus, after he sinned and refused to repent (Piska 7.2), his physical height was diminished, and he became only one hundred cubits tall (Piska 15.3). Because Cain repented, half of the decree against him was set aside, and so he was made a wanderer but not a fugitive (Piskas 47.1, [50.5]). In the days of Enosh a flood extended over half the world and served as God's warning to mankind to repent ([Piska 48.2]). While Abraham pursued the four wicked kings,¹⁵ each of his steps was at least a mile long and no dust whatever gathered on his feet ([Piska 49.5]). Though Abraham's nephew Lot cast his eyes on wantonness (Piska 3.3), his daughters intended no lewdness in lying with their father: they thought the world was destroyed and wished to renew the race of mankind (Piska 42.3).

When Abimelech sought to have his will of Sarah, God caused all the wells of the body—Abimelech's and his household's and those of people everywhere in the kingdom—to dry up, in order to clear Sarah of any suspicion that she had been ravished by

15. The four kings prefigure the four kingdoms, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome.

Abimelech (Piska 42.3). When Sarah gave birth to Isaac, it was a blessing for the whole world: barren women everywhere in the world were remembered at the same time Sarah was; God released those who were confined in prisons of madness, blindness, or muteness; God made the sun's light forty-eight times more intense than it usually is (Piska 42.4); and as Sarah gave suck to Isaac, milk spurted from her nipples in such quantity that she was able to give suck to the children of the nations of the earth (Piska 43.3).

Joseph's behavior toward his mother was gallant (Piska 12.5), as it was toward his brothers (Piska 3.4), whose fear of him after Jacob's death he went to great trouble to allay (Piska 29/30A.6).

Job was a native of the village of Karnaim in the Peraea (Piska 17.6), the village which was to be Haman's birthplace (Piska 18.6). Job's birthplace was thus presumably Edomite, possibly even Amalekite. Even so, if Job had not raised a cry against the measure of God's justice, his name would have been included in the *Tēfillah*, so that Jews in their worship would be saying "God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Job" (Piska 47.3).

In Egypt, God Himself washed at birth Hebrew children whose mothers had gone out to refuse heaps to bring them forth in secret (Piska 47.2). When the plague of the first-born befell the Egyptians, even the statues of their first-born were smashed, and even the first-born of their cattle died. Only Bithiah, Pharaoh's first-born daughter who saved Moses, survived (Piska 17.5). Not in splendid raiment, but in a white linen garment lacking the stripe of priestly office did Moses serve as High Priest in the wilderness before Aaron became the High Priest (Piska 14.11).

Elkanah, a seer of distinguished lineage, married Peninnah, his second wife, only at Hannah's bidding (Piska 43.6). Peninnah vexed Hannah in order to make her "thunder" in prayer against God (Piska 43.8), and Hannah prayed to God on New Year's Day for a child (Piska 40.1), resorting in her prayer to all kinds of suasion (Piska 43.3).

Over Samuel's courtyard, a cloud betokening God's presence

hovered always (Piska 14.11). Samuel's slaying of Agag symbolized Israel's unending battle with Amalek (Piskas 12.13, 13.7). God Himself provoked the census in David's days as an occasion for slaying seventy thousand Israelites, whom He had doomed when Israel disobeyed Him by sparing Agag, king of Amalek (Piska 11.3).

Hiram, who built Solomon's Temple, was the son of a widow in the Tribe of Dan (Piska 6.8). Hiel, who conspired with the priests of Baal to cause smoke to rise up from their altar on Carmel, was, at Elijah's bidding, slain by God (Piska 4.2). Naboth had a good voice, and when he would come up to Jerusalem all Israel would gather to hear him sing, but his reluctance to come and sing was eventually the cause of his death (Piska 25.2). Elijah, the harbinger of the Messiah (Piska 35.3), even when apparently pressing God for harsh decrees, was in fact concerned with lessening their harshness (Piska 44.3).

Nebuchadnezzar, a survivor of the war of Sennacherib (Piska 35.2), heard for eighteen years a Divine Voice reverberating in his palace urging him to go forth and destroy the House of God in Jerusalem (Piska 15.13). The beautiful women of Jerusalem were made to appear loathsome to the Babylonian generals, to prevent the generals' mating with them and thus marring the purity of Israel's lineage (Piska 31.8).

Wicked Haman was the son of a bath attendant and barber at the village of Karnaim in the Peraea, and thus could be regarded as a descendant of Amalek (Piska 18.6).

6

In addition to giving us these and many other items of historical and biographical interest concerning events and persons both within and outside Biblical narrative, *Pesikta Rabbati* provides consideration of a number of special matters. We are given, for example, a mystical account of Moses' ascent to heaven to receive the Torah (Piska 20). We are told of the seating arrangements of the Sanhedrin and certain of the court's procedures (Piskas 10.2, 28.1). Polygamy is referred to and, by impli-

cation, disapproved of (Piska 43.6). It was the Prophets in the exile, we are informed, who required Israel to observe each festival for two days (Piska 28.1). We gather that the Hasmonians were held in high regard; the Hanukkah which they instituted is said to be one of seven hanukkahs, each of which marked a notable event in the history of the world (Piska 2.1). Details with the vividness of an eye-witness account are given of the destruction of the Temple (Piska 26). The activities of the Mourners for Zion are described (Piska 34). A circumstantial account is given of the Messiah's sufferings for Israel's sake.¹⁶ He is referred to as Ephraim (Piska 36), and we are assured of his ultimate triumph as he gathers in all Jews from everywhere (Piska 31.10). The resurrection of the dead is discussed (Piskas 1.4, [48.2]), as well as the importance of burial in the Land of Israel (Piska 1.4-5). Of separate but particular interest is the fact that in its quotations from Scripture, *Pesikta Rabbati* frequently deviates from the Masoretic text.

Certain passages in the *Pesikta Rabbati* present—sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely—anti-Christian polemics. R. Nahum's homily preached in Tarsus attacks the doctrine of the Son of God as the Paschal lamb (Piska 15.24). The allusion to the wicked kingdom which enticed mortals into a wintry way seems to impugn Rome's missionary activity after her conversion to Christianity (Piska 15.14). R. Abbahu's affirmation that God committed His commandments directly to Israel denies by implication the idea of an intermediary between Him and mankind (Piskas 10.8, 21.5). The construing of Jer. 10:8 as *The wooden emblem by which they are instructed is no more than vapor* repudiates the major symbol of Christianity. The same passage contains a reproach to the nations of the world for abandoning the day which God has designated as the Sabbath (Piska 23.1). The ideal of peace on earth and good will among men is expressed elo-

16. The interpretation of Ps. 22 as alluding to the sufferings of the Messiah is the only instance in Rabbinic literature of such an interpretation of the Psalm. See Yonah Frankel, *Te'ur 'ahāriṭ hay-yamim bi-p'ēsikta Rabbati*, Jerusalem, 1959 (unpublished).

quently as a Jewish ideal ([Piska 50.6]). And finally we are told, in a dialogue between God and Moses concerning the Mishnah, of God's guarantee that no other nation can supplant Israel as God's chosen one (Piska 5.1).

7

Interesting and varied as is the Pesikta Rabbati on many matters, its chief concern, indeed its unifying concern, is discourse upon the Biblical lessons prescribed for reading on all the festivals, fasts, and special Sabbaths in their successive occurrence during the Jewish year.¹⁷ Thus Piska 1 with its discourse on the lesson for a New Moon which falls on the Sabbath sees in the moon's renewal an earnest of Israel's renewal after the Messiah's coming, and an earnest of resurrection—renewal of life after death. Piskas 2 through 9 contain discourses on the several lessons during the eight days of the Hanukkah festival. By analogy with the lights of Hanukkah at the center of the festival's observance, certain events in Jewish history associated with lights and with the gladness that light represents are enlarged upon and interpreted. These events are the building and dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness (Piskas 3, 5, 7), the building and dedication of the Temple of Solomon (Piskas 2, 6), Elijah's building of the altar on Mount Carmel (Piska 4), God's ultimate freeing of Jerusalem in the days of the Messiah (Piska 8), God's manifestation of Himself in the days of the Messiah as the God whose concern is not that victory be His but that victory be His children's (Piska 9). In connection with these events certain matters tangential to them are considered. Thus we are told why the Temple built by Solomon is spoken of as *the House of David* (Piska 2), and why the Tabernacle built by Bezalel is spoken of as the Tabernacle of Moses (Piska 5). It is also explained to us why at the dedication in the wilderness, when the secular princes brought their offerings, the prince of Judah was first (Piska 7), even as on the same occasion the prince of Ephraim preceded the prince of Manasseh (Piska 3).

17. The one exception is the lesson for the Feast of Torah (*Šimḥat Torah*).

Piskas 10 through 16 contain discourses on the lessons for five special Sabbaths: for Sabbath *Šekalim*, so called because its lesson deals with the giving of the half-shekel for the Sanctuary; for Sabbath *Zaḳor*, so called because its lesson deals with the remembrance (*zaḳor*) of Amalek; for Sabbath *Parah*, so called because its lesson deals with the ash of the Red Heifer (*parah*); for Sabbath *ha-ḥodeš*, the fourth of the special Sabbaths whose lesson deals with the command that Nisan be the first of the months (*ha-ḥodeš*); and lastly for the first Sabbath in Nisan whose lesson deals with the offerings on the altar. The successive discourses in these Piskas focus on the meaning of God's choice of, and continuing concern with, Israel (Piskas 10–11); on the rise of Amalek, Israel's antagonist—sent to make Israel expiate their sins—who will ultimately be defeated by scions of Joseph and Benjamin, most unassuming of the sons of Jacob (Piskas 12–13); on Israel's responsibility to seek purification through the ritual use of the ash of the Red Heifer (Piska 14), so as to be ready for redemption (Piska 15); and on Israel's true offerings to God—obedience and good deeds—at the redemption (Piska 16).

Piskas 17, 18, 19, [48], and [49] contain discourses on the lessons for Passover. Two of these Piskas (Piskas 17 and [49]) focus on the recurring rhythm in Jewish history of deliverance at the midnight of Passover; two are concerned with the offerings to God on Passover, one with the offering of a sheaf of barley as a token of gratitude (Piska 18), and the other with the offering of lambs as symbols of obedience and good deeds (Piska [48]); the climactic Piska of the group—Piska 19—deals with the punishment of the heathen as a manifestation of God's precise and stern judgment.

Piskas 20–25 contain discourses on the lessons for Pentecost, the occasion of Israel's receiving the Ten Commandments. For the most part (Piskas 20–24) these Piskas are given over to interpretation of the Ten Commandments, but they also pick up as a theme (Piska 25) the tithing of crops, for Pentecost was also the season of the wheat harvest.

Piskas 26-29/30 are devoted to discourses on the lessons for the three Sabbaths of Mourning and Admonition, which precede the Fast of the Ninth of Ab, and to discourses on the lessons for the Fast itself. These Piskas concentrate on particulars of events that took place prior to, and during, the destruction of Jerusalem (Piskas 26, 27/28, 29); on accounts of the exiles' experiences by the rivers of Babylon (Piska 28); and on observations concerning Israel's sinful behavior, whose consequence was the appointment of Nebuchadnezzar as the rod of God's wrath (Piskas 27, 29/30).

Discourses on the lessons for the seven Sabbaths of Consolation which follow the Fast of the Ninth of Ab are presented in Piskas 29/30A-37. These concern themselves with the Prophets as alternately chastisers and comforters of Israel, with God's resolution to act Himself as comforter of Israel, and with His admission of having been foolishly arbitrary in His punishment of Israel despite their sins (Piskas 29/30A, 29/30B, 30). Close upon these discourses comes God's assurance in Piska 31 that He will not reject, abhor, forsake, or forget Israel. As evidence of God's loving concern for Israel, Piska 32 speaks of the riches that He will lavish upon the Temple and Jerusalem, which He will rebuild when the Messiah begins his rule. In Piska 33 the Messiah himself is pointed to as further proof of God's concern for Israel: at the very beginning of creation God brought him into existence for the vindication of Israel. With the Messiah's coming, the Mourners for Zion, whom fellow Jews mocked and ridiculed because of the Mourners' yearning for deliverance, will be both comforted and vindicated (Piska 34). Despite such ridicule of the Mourners, however, Israel gave themselves, even in exile, wholly over to God and sought to bring others to dwell under His wings (Piska 35). Though the Messiah was told at the time of his creation that the sins of souls as yet unborn would bring him seven years of suffering, he joyfully took this suffering upon himself (Piska 36). In the year when redemption comes, God will cloak the Messiah in something of the splendor of His own glory (Piska 37).

In Piskas 38-47 and [50], the Pesikta Rabbati turns to the lessons for New Year's Day, for the Sabbath of Repentance, and for the Day of Atonement. These Piskas begin by setting the mood for the season of reconciliation with God. Not until man makes peace with his fellow man is reconciliation with God possible and His compassion on the Day of Atonement attainable (Piska 38); and on New Year's Day the shofar is blown as a signal to God that He judge Israel with compassion (Piska 39). Indeed, from the very beginning of creation God ordained compassion—ordained that the measure of mercy go with the measure of justice. The theme of penitence and reconciliation is extended into discourses in which the Ten Days of Penitence between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement are taken to correspond to the ten words by which the world was created, and also to the Ten Commandments and to the ten repetitions of certain liturgical formulas on New Year's Day. Still further extension of the theme leads to a discourse on the binding of Isaac, to a discourse on the etymology of "Moriah" (Piska 40), and to a discourse on the time when God will blow the shofar in Zion to signal redemption and to announce that Zion will again become the meeting place of study for the entire world (Piska 41). In other discourses on the lessons for New Year's Day, the significance of God's remembering Sarah and Hannah with children is variously interpreted (Piskas 42, 43).

As further proof of God's mercy, we are told that on the first New Year's Day, which was the day Adam was created and the day he sinned, daylight continued for thirty-six hours. Night did not fall at its set time, because after Adam's expulsion God in His mercy spared Adam the terror of the dark (Piska 46).

Discourses on the lesson drawn from the Book of Hosea for the Sabbath of Repentance follow: God delights in true repentance since it makes it unnecessary for Him to fall back upon His measure of justice. Hosea says that even though God had to remove Himself in consequence of Israel's sins, He is ready to return first (Piska 44). God pleads with Israel to repent in this world while He is seated upon the dais of mercy. Reuben, who

was first in the act of repentance, was rewarded by having his descendant Hosea be the first to speak of repentance ([Piska 50]).

The discourses on the lessons for the Day of Atonement tell us that on this day God makes Himself forget Israel's sins of the preceding year, even as He forgives Israel's iniquities (Piska 45). In connection with the account of the sacrifices offered by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, the contrast between Aaron who submitted to suffering and Job who did not submit is set forth (Piska 47).

Piskas [51] and [52] contain discourses on Tabernacles and on the Eighth Day Festival. The importance of instruction in Torah and obedience to Torah's precepts, whatever cost the instruction and obedience may entail, is stressed. The symbolic meanings of the lulab and ethrog and of the bringing together of the four plants into a single cluster are given. Tabernacles, it is stated, celebrates God's atonement for Israel on the Day of Atonement and His promise, "Let bygones be bygones. From this moment commences a new reckoning" ([Piska 51]). Unlike the nations of the earth who observe holidays riotously, Israel observe them tranquilly in prayer. As a reward for such decorum Israel were given an additional day for rejoicing, the Eighth Day Festival that follows upon the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles. Other reasons for the giving of the day are derived from certain verses in Ecclesiastes and Numbers and are presented along with several explanations of the day's significance. In conclusion, a number of verses are cited as hinting that the Temple will be rebuilt and that the ordinances connected with it will again be kept¹⁸ ([Piska 52]).

The finale, [Piska 53], asserts that the order of God's creation of the sun and the planets symbolizes Israel's course through history. Indeed, even as the Torah, heaven-given, declares the glory of God's ordering of creation, so the array in the firmament declares the glory of God's handiwork—the Torah.

18. With the exception of Piskas 3, 4, 10, 29, 29/30, 29/30A, 38, 42, 43, [48], [49], each Piska in the *Pesikta Rabbati* concludes with the promise of Israel's restoration.

As interesting as the contents of Pesikta Rabbati are its methods of presenting its contents. Though the work uses five different patterns of exposition (see section 2), all the Piskas with but two exceptions (Piskas 26 and [53]) begin with a quotation from the Scriptural lesson for the day. The quotation serves the commentator as the basis for his discourse. Generally the quotation is repeated at some point in the Piska. Each time it is given, it is considered in the light of another citation from Scripture, a citation related to it in wording or thought. Interpretation of the citation follows. Usually more than one interpretation is given, the final one serving to illumine, to amplify, or to explain the original quotation from the Scriptural lesson for the day. Hence the movement of the discourse is roughly circular. For example, Piska 7, which deals with the Festival of Hanukkah, stresses the virtue of humility. It gets at its subject first by quoting a verse from the lesson for the first day of Hanukkah: *He that presented his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab* (Num. 7:12). The verse raises a question in the mind of R. Tanhuma: Why should Nahshon, a descendant of Jacob's fourth son, not of his first son, have been the first among the secular princes to present his offerings at the dedication of the Tabernacle's altar? R. Tanhuma's answer, as developed in the rest of the discourse, is that Nahshon was a descendant of Judah, a man noted for his humility; therefore Nahshon was rewarded for his ancestor's humility with the honor of being first to present his offerings. As the initial step in the development of his theme, R. Tanhuma provides a citation from Proverbs to accompany the quotation with which the Piska begins: *A man's pride shall bring him low, but he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor* (Prov. 29:23). He then finds several situations which illustrate the statement *A man's pride shall bring him low*. He points to Adam, who refused to repent and was driven out of Eden; to Pharaoh, who acted pridefully against Moses; to Amalek, who acted pridefully against God; to Mounts Tabor and Carmel,

which proud of their height, expected that the Torah would be given upon them. By the same token, in illustration of the statement *He that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor*, R. Tanḥuma points to Abraham, who said, "I . . . am but dust and ashes" (Gen. 18:27); to Moses, who told Pharaoh, "Have thou this glory over me" (Exod. 8:5); to Joshua, who did not think himself worthy of leading the children of Israel against Amalek; to Mount Sinai, which considered itself too low to receive the Torah of the High and Lofty One; and finally to Judah, who humbled himself before his younger brother Joseph. Hence, concludes R. Tanḥuma, Judah's humility gave his descendant Nahshon the honor of being first among the secular princes to present his offerings at the Tabernacle's altar.

A number of Piskas—30 of the 53—follow the Biblical quotation of the day's lesson with the phrase "Let our master teach us." These words introduce a question or problem of religious principle or practice. The theme evoked by the answer to the question or the solution of the problem is the central concern of all the discourses that follow in the Piska. For example, in Piska 44, which in connection with the Sabbath of Repentance concerns itself with the theme of repentance, the question is asked, "If one who keeps committing sins keeps saying that through repentance he will be forgiven—what answer should be made to him?" The answer to the question comes at once: "He who keeps promising to repent will never have strength enough to repent." So, too, in Piska 47, which is linked to the Day of Atonement, the question is asked, "Which is the greater, prayer or repentance?" and again the answer is given.

In some Piskas the connection of the question-and-answer with the theme set by the lesson for the day is not plain at first glance, but on closer inspection reveals itself.¹⁹ Thus, in Piska 1 the theme is Israel's renewal after the coming of the Messiah and the renewal of life after death. The Piska, however, begins by asking a question that does not seem to point to the theme at all: What, it asks, should a man do when he discovers after saying Grace

19. The rule does not apply of course to a Piska such as Piska 7, where the text is not complete.

after Meals on the New Moon that he has forgotten to include in the Grace the part about the New Moon? The answer is given that if his mind was diverted in the meanwhile he must repeat the Grace and this time include the part about the New Moon. The hidden connection between the theme of renewal and the Grace after Meals runs as follows: As the taking of food renews the strength of the body, so the Grace after Meals renews a man's sense of gratitude to God the Giver. Inasmuch as the New Moon symbolizes the renewal of Israel and the renewal of life after death, it is to be regarded as a festal day equal in importance to festivals and Sabbaths, and hence is to be observed with the same reverence. Since the idea of renewal is implicit in the Grace after Meals, it follows that the New Moon as a symbol of renewal must be recognized in the Grace recited on the New Moon. Therefore, as on festivals and Sabbaths when omitting the part that refers to festivals and Sabbaths requires that the entire Grace be recited again and the omission corrected, so the same procedure must be followed in reciting the Grace on the New Moon.

As a further instance of a hidden connection between the theme of a Piska and the question-answer it begins with, consider Piska 2. The Piska's theme deals with David's hope of building the Temple, but the question at the head of the Piska asks where the Hanukkah lamp is to be kindled, and the answer is given that it is to be kindled at the window, though in a time of danger it may be kindled within the house. The connection between David's hope and the kindling of the lamp is traced in this way: Partly because of the wars David was fighting, he could not realize his hope of building the Temple. Unable to kindle the lamps of the Temple's dedication in fact—at the window, so to speak—he had to kindle them in fancy, within himself, within his "house." This inner dedication of the lamps was regarded by God as though David had built and dedicated the material Temple, just as in a time of danger the kindling of the Hanukkah lamp within the house is regarded as a valid performance of a man's religious obligation.

For one further illustration, consider Piska 12, which brings

together the question of what blessing one should say on walking through a burial ground and the theme of Amalek, Israel's deadly adversary throughout history. To the question of what is a proper blessing to be said by one who walks through a burial ground, one suggestion is "Blessed is He who keeps track of each and every one of you"; another suggestion is "Blessed is He who created you in judgment, who brought death to you in judgment, and who will raise you up in judgment." The question and its answers point to the theme of the Piska—to Amalek, Israel's ancient adversary, who filled Israel's cemeteries throughout history.

The two blessings, in connection with Amalek's warfare against Israel, suggest two different attitudes that one may take towards the death suffered by Israel's martyrs. The first urges implicit trust in the God "who keeps track of each and every one of you." The second, in its warning of the judgment that follows upon sinfulness—"Blessed is He . . . who brought death to you in judgment"—urges confession of one's own sinfulness, for it has been the sinfulness of the children of Israel throughout history that has brought successive Amaleks down upon them.

9

Inasmuch as the subjects, structures, and modes of exposition in the various Piskas have been discussed, what now requires our consideration is the name of the work and the time of its composition. The name *Pesikta Rabbati*, by which the work is generally known, occurs first in Rashi (1040-1105), in his comment on Isa. 51:12 and again in his comment on Gen. Rabbah 10:9. The work is also referred to as *Pēsikta Rabbēta* by Zedekiah ben Benjamin (13th century), in his *Šibbole ha-leket* (ed. Buber, p. 13), and is also so named in the running head of pages 49-74 in the work's Prague edition (1654). In a comment by Rashi on Exod 6:14 it is called *Pēsikta Gēdolah*; in the eleventh century Maḥzor Vitry, (p. 361) it is called *Pēsikta hag-Gēdolah*; in a comment by Rashi on 2 Sam. 24:9 and in the Tosafot by R. Isaac ben Samuel of

Dampierre (12th century) on B.Yeḥ 81b it is referred to simply as "Pesikta"; in Yalkuṭ Lam. 1040 it is referred to as *Yēlam-mēḏenu*, as "Midrash" in the Tosafot by R. Isaac ben Samuel of Dampierre on B. Shab 49a; and as *Haggadāt 'Amora'im* in a comment by Rashi on 2 Sam. 24:9.

Though it is generally difficult to determine the time of composition of a particular Midrash, Pesikta Rabbati in its very first Piska appears to offer a clue to the time of the work's composition. When the children of Israel ask God when He will restore the glory they once knew in the Temple, the text first notes that since the time of the Temple's destruction seven hundred and seventy-seven years have already gone by, and then adds that "at this writing it is one thousand and one hundred and fifty-one years."

The reference to the lapse of 777 years since the Temple's destruction is accepted by Zunz as an authentic part of the text and not as a copyist's gloss,²⁰ and he concludes therefore that the Pesikta Rabbati was composed in Europe after 845 c.e. The failure of R. Nathan of Rome (1035-1106) to cite it in his *'Aruḥ* leads Zunz to conjecture that the work was composed in Greece—otherwise, he believes, R. Nathan would have cited it.

Using 845 c.e. as his point of reference, Zunz perceives in the Pesikta Rabbati influences of certain post-Talmudic works such as *Pēsikta dē-Raḇ Kahāna*, *Šē'eltoṭ*, and the tractate *Sofērim*. These, he asserts, assumed their final form *ca.* 700, 750, and 800, respectively.²¹ As further evidence for the date he assigns to the Pesikta Rabbati, Zunz points to what he considers parallels and similarities with other post-Talmudic Haggadic works, and as concluding evidence, takes certain Hebrew locutions in the Pesikta Rabbati to be of post-Talmudic and Gaonic origin.

V. Aptowitz also assumes that the statement that 777 years have elapsed since the Temple's destruction is not a copyist's

20. The reference to 1151 years elapsed since the Temple's destruction, which corresponds to 1220 c.e., Zunz takes to be a reader's gloss which got into the text. See his *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, 2d ed. (Frankfurt, 1892), p. 255; *had-Dēraṣoṭ*, p. 380.

21. *had-Dēraṣoṭ*, pp. 118, 47.

gloss but an authentic part of the text. Not only does he agree with Zunz on the date: he proceeds to find in the *Pesikta Rabbati* passages taken not only from the *Šē'eltoṭ* but also from the *Halakot Gēdoloṭ*,²² and in *Piskas* 44.9 and 46.2 he even finds a specific reference to Jehudai Gaon of Sura (760-764).²³ Jacob Mann, who also accepts 845 c.e. as the time of *Pesikta Rabbati*'s composition, suggests that the redactor of the *Pesikta Rabbati* was an Italian Aggadist who, in the first half of the ninth century, settled in Jerusalem, where he joined the Mourners for Zion (see *Piska* 34).²⁴

Friedmann, however, in his edition of the *Pesikta Rabbati*, takes the 777 years to refer not to the time elapsed since the Second Temple's destruction but to the time elapsed since the First Temple's destruction, and concludes that the work was composed in 355 c.e.²⁵ Friedmann's suggestion is attractive and seems supported by internal evidence, for the Amoraim cited in the *Pesikta Rabbati* lived in Palestine in the third and fourth centuries of the Common Era. Though Friedmann does not make the point, his dating gets additional support from the bold polemics in the *Pesikta Rabbati* against Christianity. These polemics would indicate that the work was written in a century when Jews still dared to challenge Christianity openly—that is, in the third or fourth century, when Christianity had not yet firmly established itself. On the other hand, *Piskas* 34-37, which Fried-

22. Composed in 760 by Jehudai Gaon of Sura; so Max L. Margolis and Alexander Marx, *A History of the Jewish People* (Philadelphia, 1927), p. 256. Or in 825 by Simeon Kayyara; so Epstein, *Kitṭe*, 2, 402.

23. See V. Aptowitz, "Untersuchungen zur Gaonäischen Literatur," *HUCA*, 8/9 (1931-32), 383-410.

24. Jacob Mann, *The Jews in Egypt and in Palestine under the Fatimid Caliphs* (London, 1920), 1, 48.

In a recent study, Mošeh Zucker seeks to prove that the Mourners for Zion praised in *Pesikta Rabbati* were Karaites, a conclusion which seems difficult to accept. See his "Tēguḇoṭ littēnu'aṭ 'ābele Šiyyon haḳ-Ḳara'im baš-sifruṭ ha-rabbaniṭ," *Albeck Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 5723/1963), pp. 378-85.

25. The glossator follows Rabbinic chronology, which reckons the Persian period in Jewish history (536-320 b.c.e.) as having lasted only 52 years. See Seḡer 'Olam Rabbah, ed. Ratner, chap. 30, nn. 15 and 51; and Friedmann's Introduction to *Pesikta Rabbati*, p. 25.

mann asserts to be of Tannaitic origin and therefore even earlier than the other Piskas, are very likely of post-Amoraic compilation, possibly in the seventh century, not in the second or the third.

The conflict as to the time of composition, whether fourth century, seventh century, or ninth century, comes from the fact that the references to the years that had elapsed since the Temple's destruction are taken as authentic parts of the text. Actually, these references may well be no more than readers' glosses incorporated into the text by later copyists. Internal evidence supports this view. To begin with, the reference to the dates breaks into the continuity of the passage and mars its prayerful mood. Furthermore, the reference is really irrelevant to the question that Israel puts to God: "When wilt Thou restore us to the glory which was ours?"²⁶ It is worth noting that the Yalkuṭ on Ps. 42, which gives the Pesikta Rabbati as its source, contains no reference whatever to the dates.²⁷

Approaching the problem of the date of the work's compilation from a different angle, Bernard J. Bamberger points to a passage in Piska 37 which reads: "In the year in which the king Messiah reveals himself, all the kings of the nations of the earth will be at strife with one another. The king of Persia will make war against a king of Arabia,²⁸ and this king of Arabia will go to Edom to take counsel from the Edomites. And the king of Persia will again lay the whole world waste" (Piska 36.2). In his closely reasoned analysis of the passage Bamberger argues that the reference to the war between Persia and Arabia sets the date of compilation of Piskas 34-37 at some time during the five years between 632 and 637. On the basis of certain stylistic con-

26. In an illuminating conversation, Professor Shalom Spiegel pointed out that the very wording of the date—the use of a term like "already"—indicates a looking back in time by a reader who while reading a text comes to the question "When wilt Thou restore us to the glory which was ours?" Hence, Professor Spiegel concluded, the year 777 may well be regarded as an interpolation.

27. As pointed out by Eliakim Smieler Mehlsack in his *Sefer Ra'biyah*, Ofen, 1837.

28. Bamberger reads these words "The king of Persia will be at war with the king of Arabia," even though *mitgareh* would seem to suggest "make war."

siderations, he finds further support for assigning the work to the seventh century, and his conclusion is that Piskas 34-37 must have originated in Palestine, and most probably in Jerusalem, the city with which the Mourners for Zion were usually associated.²⁹ The conclusion gets some indirect support from Yehudah Eben-Shemuel's investigation of certain Messianic texts, one of which may have been composed in a community which awaited the Messiah's coming in 638.³⁰

There are, however, certain difficulties in Bamberger's argument: Persia did not wage war against Arabia in the seventh century, and in the seventh century Arabs did not counsel with Edom—with Romans or Byzantines, that is. The passage Bamberger quotes would therefore more appropriately and precisely bear upon a time when Byzantium used Arab kingdoms such as that of the Ghassanids as weapons against Persia. Thus the war referred to in Piska 37 would have taken place in the days when Byzantium was still a great power and the realm of the king of Arabia mentioned in the Piska might have been an outpost of the Byzantine empire.³¹ It would appear, in short, that the arguments for a seventh-century compilation of Piskas 34-37 are not strong enough. Indeed from the very same evidence it can be claimed with equal force that the Piskas were compiled in the sixth, or maybe in the fifth, century.

However, if one were inclined to accept the fifth or sixth or seventh century as the date of compilation, the references to the Mourners for Zion would create a grave difficulty, for out-

29. Bernard J. Bamberger, "A Messianic Document of the Seventh Century," *HUCA*, 15 (1940), 427-28.

30. In both the *Pesikta Rabbati* (Piska 37.1) and in the Book of Zerubbabel, the Messiah is described as shut up in prison. See Yehudah Eben-Shemuel, *Midrāše gē'ulah*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 5714/1954), pp. 63, 73.

The particular time for awaiting the Messiah is significant, because in 637, at the battle of Kadiisiya, Persia was defeated by the armies of Islam.

31. The king of Arabia referred to in *Pesikta Rabbati* could have been a sixth-century ruler of the Ghassanids, who, as opponents of the Persian dependency of Hira, provided an outpost for the Byzantine empire. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 14th ed., 2, 178, s.v. "Arabia."

side of the *Pesikta Rabbati* we have no evidence that such a group existed during these centuries.³² On the other hand, if one were to assign a later century—the eighth or ninth, for example—one would expect to find some reference in the text to Arab rule in Palestine, which began in the seventh century. Under the Arabs Jews were permitted to reside again in Jerusalem. From among these Jews the Mourners for Zion came, but nowhere in the *Pesikta Rabbati* does one find any mention of, or allusion to, Arab rule in Palestine. The lack of such allusion makes it virtually impossible to assign the eighth or ninth century as the time of the *Pesikta Rabbati*'s compilation.

In favor of a ninth-century compilation, Zunz and Aptowitzer claim, as we have previously noted, that certain passages in the *Pesikta Rabbati* were copied from post-Talmudic works of the eighth or ninth century, but these claims do not stand up. Some of the "post-Talmudic" works, such as the *Pēsikta dē-Raḥ Kahāna*, are not post-Talmudic at all,³³ and others, such as the *Šē'eltot*, copied certain passages from the *Pesikta Rabbati*. As to the locutions said by Zunz and Aptowitzer to be of post-Talmudic and Gaonic origin, some may be later interpolations and others may be older than Zunz and Aptowitzer suppose. As to Zunz's argument that the '*Aruḳ*' does not cite the *Pesikta Rabbati*, it may well be, as Professor Saul Lieberman pointed out in another connection,³⁴ that the *Pesikta Rabbati*, composed in Palestine, had not reached Rome, where R. Nathan, the '*Aruḳ*'s author, resided, and hence was not cited in the '*Aruḳ*'.

Believing, as did most scholars of a former generation, that

32. A. Marmorstein's attempt to ascribe these *Piskas* to the third century has not been accepted. See his "Eine messianische Bewegung im dritten Jahrhundert," *Jeschurun*, 13 (1926), 16–28, 171–86, 369–83; and Mošeh Zucker's critique in the *Albeck Jubilee Volume*, pp. 379–80.

At the same time the mood of the Mourners for Zion is reflected in a work such as 2 Baruch, composed shortly after the destruction of the Second Temple. See 10:6–7, 9–12; 11:6–7. See also *Encyclopedia Hebraica*, s.v. '*Āḇele Siyyon*'.

33. Bernard J. Mandelbaum believes that the *Pēsikta dē-Raḥ Kahāna* was composed not in 700, as Zunz surmised, but in the fifth century. See PRKM, 2, x.

34. See his edition of *Deut. Rabbah*, p. xxii.

the Jewish community in Palestine engaged in no literary activity during the eighth and ninth centuries, a scholar like Zunz was wont to ascribe to Italy or Greece any Jewish literary work which could not be ascribed to Babylonia. But more recent scholarship has conclusively shown that the Jewish community in Palestine continued to be intellectually active,³⁵ so that the Pesikta Rabbati could have been compiled as well in Palestine as in Italy or Greece.

In summary, the Pesikta Rabbati can be taken to be of Palestinian origin. Its spelling, for example, follows Palestinian usage; a name like Ḥanina ends with the letter *he* (Piska 29/30B.4) instead of *'alef* ordinarily found in non-Palestinian usage. Its language, too, seems characteristically Palestinian. Expressions such as *hak-kol heymak lidēroš*, "Are you spinning all this out on your own, without any support from Scripture?" (Piskas 5.1 and 47.2), and *had-da'aṭ haz-zo*, "It was along such lines as these we have been following" (Piska 33.11), are unmistakably in the Palestinian idiom. The fact that Pesikta Rabbati provides a discourse for only one day of Pentecost and no discourse for the Feast of the Torah (*Šimḥat Torah*) also leads to the conclusion that the work is of Palestinian origin, for the second day of Pentecost and the Feast of the Torah were initiated and observed in Jewish communities outside of Palestine. Had the Pesikta Rabbati been of non-Palestinian origin it would surely have had Piskas devoted to each of these two days. Furthermore, as we have previously seen, the teachers cited in the work are, without exception, Palestinians. It may be said finally that since the teachers are all Palestinian Amoraim of the third and fourth centuries, and since the evidence goes strongly against compilation of the work in the eighth or ninth century, the most likely date for the Pesikta Rabbati's redaction is the seventh century, although the sixth century is also a possibility.

35. See Jacob Mann, "Some Midrashic Genizah Fragments," *HUCA*, 14 (1939), 304; and *Tarbiš*, 5 (1934), 299.

The first edition of the *Pesikta Rabbati*, its *Grundtext*, appeared in Prague in 1654.³⁶ In order, however, to provide as accurate a text as possible for this translation, the first edition has been collated with Codex Parma 1240,³⁷ with the two sets of marginal annotations in the copy of the Prague edition owned by the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America,³⁸ and with Codex Casanata 3324.³⁹ Thorough use has also been made of the glosses and commentary of Ephraim Zalman Margolioth, the commentary of Ze'eb Wolf Einhorn, the commentary of David Luria, and above all of Friedmann's annotations in his edition of the *Pesikta Rabbati*. Hence the present translation⁴⁰ is based on an eclectic text made up in the main of the Prague

36. Not in 1656, as Zunz (*had-Dēraṣot*, p. 376) surmised. The new date was established by Mošeh Sanders in *'Arefeṭ*, 3 (5721/1961), 99–101. The subsequent editions were: Shklov, 1806; Breslau, 1831, with a commentary by Ze'eb Wolf Einhorn; Lemberg, 1853, with two commentaries by Ephraim Zalman Margolioth; Vienna, 1880, with a commentary by Meir Friedmann; and Warsaw, 1893, in which Einhorn's and Margolioth's commentaries were reprinted and David Luria's commentary added.

37. Parma MS does not contain Piska 1.2, which includes the purported year of the *Pesikta Rabbati*'s composition. Nor does Parma MS contain Piska 10.15, Piskas 29, 29/30, 46, and [53]. On the other hand, it contains the [Preamble to Piska 15], a few paragraphs at the beginning of Piska 18, Piskas 29/30A and [51], and the conclusion to [Piska 52]—Piskas and parts of Piskas which the Prague edition does not have.

38. The first set of annotations is based on a collation with the Parma MS.

39. The part of Casanata MS which, through the kindness of President Bernard Mandelbaum, I was able to obtain, contains Piskas 19–23.7, concluding with the words "All the kinds of food which were created during the six days of creation were upon it to be eaten."

40. Hitherto only the following Piskas have appeared in translation: Piskas 20 and 26, in J. Winter and Aug. Wünsche, *Die jüdische Literatur seit Abschluss des Kanons, Geschichte der jüdisch-Hellenistischen und Talmudischen Literatur* (Berlin, 1897), pp. 445–64; part of Piska 26 (ed. Friedmann, 131b), in B. Halper, *Post-Biblical Hebrew Literature* (Philadelphia, 1921), pp. 38–39. In addition, the counterparts of Piskas 14–18, 29/30A, 29/30B, 32, and [51–52], which are found in the *Pesikta dē-Raḥ Kahāna*, have appeared in translation in Aug. Wünsche, *Pesikta des Rab Kahana* (Leipzig, 1885); and the counterparts of Piskas 18 and [52], which are found in Lev. Rabbah, have appeared in the Soncino translation of the Midrash Rabbah.

edition and the Parma and Casanata MSS, with occasional emendations suggested by the aforementioned commentators. All important variants and all emendations are set out in footnotes.

Friedmann's instinct for the right reading was so extraordinary that in many instances he anticipated the readings in Parma MS and Casanata MS, though he had no access to them. Where such readings are employed in the translation, it may be assumed that support for them is to be found in either one or both of the MSS; this support is occasionally pointed out in the footnotes to this translation. When the MSS, however, do not support Friedmann's emendations or interpolations, the translation's use of his readings is indicated by angular brackets (< >). The numbering and ordering of the Piskas herein follows Friedmann's edition; the division of sections within the Piskas follows for the most part the Breslau and Warsaw editions.⁴¹

The general procedure followed in the translation has been set out in detail in the Introduction to my translation of the *Midrash on Psalms* (YJS, 13, xxxii-xxxiv). Certain problems of translation peculiar to the Pesikta Rabbati must be here noted, however. Such phrases as *šanu rabbotenu*, "our Masters taught"; *zehu še'-amar haḳ-ḳaṭub*, "these words are to be considered in the light of the verse"; *paṭaḥ*, "began his discourse"; and *daḅar 'aḥer*, "another comment," do not merely introduce comment or discourse as they appear to do at first glance. Their function in the text's rhetorical structure is much more important. They point to the organization of the ideas within a Piska, and when

41. The Prague, Shklov, Breslau, Lemberg, and Warsaw editions of the Pesikta Rabbati contain Piskas 1-47. In his edition, Friedmann followed with some modification the numbering of the Piskas introduced in the Breslau edition. He also added four Piskas which he captioned Additament A, and numbered a-d. These four Piskas Solomon Buber secured for Friedmann out of Samuel David Luzzatto's (1800-65) collection of transcriptions of manuscripts. In the translation, these four Piskas, transcribed from Parma MS 1240, are numbered [48], [49], [50], and [52]. In addition to these, Adolph Jellinek (1821-93) secured for Friedmann a fragment from the manuscript of Genesis Rabbati, published subsequently by Chanoch Albeck in 1940. This fragment, which Friedmann in his edition captioned Additament B, is numbered in the translation as [Piska 53].

so understood do much to unite and clarify its discourse. Accordingly, the Tannaim or Amoraim whose words are quoted in the passages following such phrases are not to be regarded merely as participants in a rambling debate, but as authorities quoted by the commentator, whose utterances he summons to prove the point he is making or to enrich a line of reasoning. Hence the phrase "R. . . . 'amar" must sometimes be read not simply "R. So-and-so said" but "as R. So-and-so-said." Read in this way the phrase does not merely identify a speaker; indicating the commentator's development of his discourse, it implies distinctions, rhetorical and logical, which are translated by qualifying phrases. Hence the phrase "R. . . . 'amar" is variously translated, according to the context in which it is found, as "to be sure, R. So-and-so said," or as "however, R. So-and-so said," or as "even though R. So-and-so said," and the like.⁴²

In support of the extended or different readings given to such a phrase as "R. . . . 'amar," it can be pointed out that the commentator in *Pesikta Rabbati*, setting down discourse familiar to students and scholars, simply omitted connections which he regarded as unnecessary for his special audience. What might appear elliptical or disconnected to a modern reader had a coherence and continuity perfectly plain to the Jewish student or scholar or Rabbi of the first millenium of the Common Era. The commentator's awareness of his audience's intimate knowledge of the material he was presenting accounts for the asyndetic structure so characteristic of Rabbinic style—the omission of directive and transitional words and phrases within sentences and between sentences, words and phrases ordinarily required to make logical distinctions or qualifications within a discourse.

Nor is it only within the sentence that syntactic connections are often omitted: such connections are sometimes omitted between paragraph and paragraph, so that the modern reader must have supplied the logical connections between the paragraphs. Only by

42. For examples of the several phrases as "rhetorical command posts," see Piskas 5.1, 5.4, 7.2, 7.5, and 12.4. See also my article, "Overlooked Meanings of Certain Editorial Terms in the *Pesikta Rabbati*," *JQR.* 52 (1962), 264-72.

close study of the context in which such seemingly disconnected paragraphs appear can the right relation between them be discovered. Hence at several places in the translation—Piskas 12.5; 15.21; 20.3; 21.8; 21.15—a sentence or two, or even a paragraph, has been interpolated to make clear and explicit the flow of the discourse. It has not been thought necessary to indicate all such interpolations, since they are to be regarded—e.g. Piska 21.10, first paragraph—as implicit in the text itself. In the five places cited just above, however, where interpolation has been more extensive than usual, the interpolated material has been enclosed in brackets.

A final word in regard to the translation: men have been working ever since the days of William Tyndale (1530–31) to put the Hebrew Bible into exact and idiomatic English, but it was not until 1718 that there appeared in London the first translation of a Rabbinic text into English—William Wotton's version of Mishnah Šabbat and Mishnah 'Erubin—and only in the past century or so have such translations appeared with increasing frequency. These translations have opened up to the world at large a treasury of Jewish literature to which only a few scholars have previously held the key. If the present translation of the Pesikta Rabbati enhances by ever so little the reader's appreciation and understanding of this rich treasury, which in Jewish tradition ranks next in esteem to the Torah itself, the efforts of the translator will have been amply rewarded.

APPENDIX

Description of the MS texts;
parallels of some of the Piskas
in the Pesikta Rabbati

Parma MS

Parma MS 1240, containing the Pesikta Rabbati, the Tanḥuma, and eleven other Midrashim, has been described by Giovanni

Bernardo de Rossi.⁴³ Menahem ben Jacob, a scribe resident in a town in the Rhineland, completed the writing of the manuscript in 1270. This is the earlier of the two MSS used in the present translation.

Casanata MS

Casanata MS 3324, containing Piskas of the Pēsikta dē-Rab Kahāna as well as Piskas of Pesikta Rabbati, has been described by Gustavo Sacerdote.⁴⁴ The MS was transcribed by Isaac Abraham Abigedor in the 17th century. The Hebrew script is Spanish, but shows Italian influence.⁴⁵

Prague edition of the Pesikta Rabbati with marginal annotations (SPR and SPR1)

The copy of the Prague edition of the Pesikta Rabbati owned by the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary contains annotations in two hands. The first set of annotations contains readings drawn from the Parma MS; the second set, in a different hand, is in the nature of a very brief commentary.⁴⁶

In Piskas 20 and 21, the Parma MS and the Casanata MS as well as SPR are regularly cited. In other Piskas, though SPR is not cited regularly to corroborate readings in the Parma MS, the

43. See his *MSS Codices hebraici* (Parma, 1803), 3, 116, No. 1240; and William G. Braude, "The Piska Concerning the Sheep which Rebelled," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research*, 30 (1962), 1-35.

The order of the divers material in Parma MS is as follows: Piskas 1-18, *Šir haš-Širim Rabbah*, Piskas [48], [49], 25, 19, 20-24, 29/30A, 29/30B, 30-43, [50], 44, 45, 47, [51], [52], *Mišle*, 'Amiroṭ l'ē'atid, *Pirḳe R. Yošī'ah*, *Keṣad yēširaṭ haw-wēlaḡ*, 'Arba'ah mēlaḡim niḡa'u, 'Eliyyahu zuṭa, *Pirḳe R. Eli'ezer*, 'Oṭiyyoṭ de-R. 'Aḳiḇa, *Dēḡarim Rabbah*, Piskas 27, 26, 28, 'Eḡah Rabbah.

44. See his *Catalogo dei Codici Ebraici della Biblioteca Casanatense* (Florence, 1897), No. 66.

45. See PRKM, Hebrew Introduction, pp. 9-10.

46. In a private communication, January 18, 1957, the late Professor Isaiah Sonne wrote the following: "The scripts (both hands) are of northern Italy (probably Piedmont), of the second half of the eighteenth century (1760-90). As a mere guess, I would say that they were written in the circle of the *San-guineti* or *de Vecchi* (*miz-zēḡenim*) in Casale and/or Vercelli."

reader may assume that even where SPR is not specifically referred to, the readings in SPR and the Parma MS are the same. Limited access to SPR has unfortunately prevented unequivocal assertion of the congruence of Parma MS with SPR.

*Parallels of some of the Piskas in Pesikta Rabbati
with other Rabbinic texts*

The Pesikta Rabbati contains ten chapters that parallel, or come very close to paralleling, ten chapters in the Pēsiḳta dē-Rab Kahāna. Piskas 14–18 in one parallel in many respects Piskas 4–8 in the other; Piskas 29/30A and 29/30B parallel Piska 16; Piska 32 parallels Piska 18; Piskas [51] and [52] resemble Piskas 27 and 28. In addition, Piskas 18 and [52] of the Pesikta Rabbati closely resemble chapters 28 and 30 in Leviticus Rabbah.



I wish to record my gratitude for aid of various kinds. Professor Saul Lieberman of the Jewish Theological Seminary called my attention to the existence of the Parma MS and guided me in the resolution of certain problems. Professor Efraim E. Urbach of the Hebrew University read with me a portion of the Parma MS, as he taught me how to make sense of it. Professor Mordecai Margulies of the Jewish Theological Seminary generously cleared up innumerable difficulties throughout the Pesikta Rabbati. Rabbi Menahem M. Kasher of Yeshiva University, Professor Shalom Spiegel of the Jewish Theological Seminary, Professor Jakob J. Petuchowski of the Hebrew Union College–Jewish Institute of Religion, Michael Fink of the Rhode Island School of Design, and Beryl Segal assisted from time to time.

Upon every word of the translation my friend Professor Israel J. Kapstein of Brown University brought to bear his love and reverence for Holy Writ and his extraordinary skill in writing, and despite many and exacting responsibilities, found time to read the entire work twice. Leon Nemoy, with whom I worked as though he and I were one, read the manuscript four times. My colleague Rabbi Jerome S. Gurland and I spent two pleasant

years in intense study of Pesikta Rabbati. The librarians David Jonah and H. Glenn Brown of Brown University, Gerson Cohen of the Jewish Theological Seminary, I. Edward Kiev and Herbert C. Zafren of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion were always kind and thoughtful. Mrs. Jerome L. Stein prepared the indexes. Mrs. Alexander Tanenbaum and my secretary Mrs. Philip Kaplan typed the manuscript. The Joseph M. Finklestein Foundation and the many friends in Temple Beth-El—notably the family of the late Bernard K. Symonds—who contributed to the Rabbi's Special Fund provided financial assistance. All played important roles in bringing the work to a conclusion.

'Ereḥ Šabbat Way-yēḥi, 5725
December 18, 1964

PISKA I

SUMMARY

The New Moon as an earnest of Israel's renewal and of the soul's resurrection

In the Grace after Meals on the New Moon, during the prayer for the Messiah's coming, a man is required to say "O Lord our God, bestow upon us the blessing of Thy festal seasons," which is to say that New Moons are considered equal in importance to festal seasons and even to the Sabbath. Their importance is borne out by a verse which predicts that in the days of the Messiah, *all flesh shall come* (Isa. 66:23), every Sabbath as well as every New Moon, to worship before the Lord in Jerusalem, where "the blessing of the festal seasons" will be bestowed upon mankind (Sec. 1).

And what may "the blessing of the festal seasons" consist of? The blessing may be the justice meted out to those nations who revile God; the blessing may be a God-like quality of the kind once bestowed upon the people of Israel at Sinai; or the blessing may be that throughout the year the children of Israel will be filled with the holy spirit (Sec. 2).

But will all mankind be able to come to Jerusalem every New Moon and every Sabbath? Yes, because Jerusalem will then be as large as the whole world.

How will people be able to travel back and forth to Jerusalem every week or even every month? Clouds will speedily carry them to and fro.

All flesh shall come to Jerusalem, including the heathen who did not enslave Israel and who restrained the evil impulse within them; all will come alive and earn the right to behold the face of the Shekinah (Sec. 3).

Because the dead in the Land of Israel will be the first to come alive, the Patriarchs sought burial in the Land of Israel.

What about sinners buried in the Land of Israel? The fire which inflicted punishment upon the Land of Israel inflicted it also upon the

bones of such sinners, and thus earned for them the right to come alive and behold the presence of God. As for righteous men buried outside the Land of Israel, they will be brought to the Land through underground passages, the journey being a kind of purgatory. But the wicked heathen—even those buried in the Land of Israel—will not have suffered purgation enough to be resurrected (Secs. 4-6).

How many years before the Messiah comes? Maybe in a span of forty years; maybe in a span of two thousand years; maybe in a certain span between these. When the Messiah comes, all mankind, the quick and the sometime dead alike, will be one in the worship of the one God (Sec. 7).

*<And it shall come to pass, that
from one New Moon to another, and
from one Sabbath to another, shall
all flesh come to worship before
Me, saith the Lord (Isa. 66:23).¹>*

1. Let our master instruct us: When a Jew reciting Grace after Meals on the New Moon forgets to include the words referring to the New Moon,² what should he do?

Our Masters taught us: If he forgets and does not include the words referring to the New Moon but at once,³ upon finishing the Grace, realizes, before his attention is diverted from the Grace, that he has omitted them,⁴ then he is not required to go back to the beginning of the Grace; instead, he makes good the omission by appending to the Grace a brief benediction: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast given New Moons to His people Israel. Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who hallowest Israel and the New Moons."

1. Isa. 66:1-24 is the haftarah for a Sabbath which coincides with the New Moon. See B. Meg 31a, and Table of Scriptural Lessons, p. xv.

2. See APB, p. 282, for the special prayer for the New Moon said as part of the third blessing in the Grace.

3. If he did not remember them at once, he would have to go back to the beginning of the Grace.

4. See Lieberman, *TKF*, I, 36, n. 27, and reference to P. Ber 7:5, 11c.

Now in that part of the Grace which refers to the New Moon⁵—so taught Simeon ben Abba in the name of R. Johanan—a man is required to say the prayer “O Lord our God, bestow upon us the blessing of Thy festal seasons.”⁶ Thus we see that New Moons are equal in importance to festal seasons, as indicated by the verse *In the day of your gladness, both in your festal seasons and in your New Moons, ye shall blow the trumpets* (Num. 10:10). Indeed [insofar as on New Moons and on Sabbaths a special prayer for the day is included in the Grace after Meals], New Moons are equal in importance even to the Sabbath. You may state it, accordingly, as a fact that New Moons are equal in importance to both festal seasons and Sabbaths. And whence do we know that New Moons are regarded as equal in importance to Sabbaths? From the lesson in the Prophets prescribed⁷ for the New Moon: *And it shall come to pass, that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship.*

2. <*And it shall come to pass, etc.*> R. Tanḥuma began his discourse by quoting the verse *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: When shall I come and appear before God* (Ps. 42:3),⁸ and followed it with a series of comments which are set forth in his discussion of the portion beginning *After the death of the two sons of Aaron* (Lev. 16:2).⁹

Another comment: *My soul thirsteth for God [Elohim]*—thirsts for the time when Thou wilt execute judgment upon the heathen; [the term *Elohim* being used here in the sense of meting out

5. So ZA, who emends P's reading “Now during the week of a festival.” ZA's emendation is brilliantly sustained by *Mahzor Vitry*, (Nuremberg, 1923), p. 361, which refers specifically to this passage in PR; and also by a number of Genizah fragments. See TKF, I, 36, n. 27.

6. This prayer, no longer included in the Grace or in the *Musaf* for the New Moon, continues to be recited in the *Musaf* for Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. See APB, p. 238.

7. On the meaning of *hilym* see Mann, *The Bible*, I, 558.

8. Psalm 42, from which this verse is quoted, is the lament of one to whom adverse circumstances had denied the privilege of visiting the Temple during the three great festivals, Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles.

9. Perhaps Piska 47.2.

justice,¹⁰ as in the verse] *Thou shalt not revile Elohim*, [that is, the judges] (Exod. 22:27).

Another comment: *For God*—that is, [my soul thirsteth] for the time when that godlike quality which Thou didst bestow on me at Sinai will return, the time referred to in the verse *I have said: Ye are godlike* (Ps. 82:6).¹¹

Another comment: *For God [Elohim]*—that Thou¹² clothe [the children of Israel] with Divine Power as Thou didst clothe them at Sinai. Bring near the time of redemption that thereby the oneness of Thy Divine Power be acknowledged throughout Thy world, *When the Lord shall be king over all the earth* (Zech. 14:9). [Thus the Psalm is using the term *Elohim* in the special sense] that it has in the passage where Jacob is told *So give thee Divine Power, and do thou take it* (Gen. 27:28),¹³ the passage here referring to the time when [the progeny of] Jacob will [at long last] take on Divine Power.

Another comment: *For God, for the living God* (Ps. 42:3), who lives and endures for ever and ever.

In another comment, the words are read *For God, for the God of the living*, patron and protector of our lives, who brings rain in season and at the proper time bespangles [the earth] with dew for our lives' sake.

Another comment: *For God, for the living God*, the God who

10. Cf. MTeh 56:3. In the comments which follow, the commentators, puzzled by the apparent tautology in the phrases *for God*, *for the living God*, will discover special meaning in the several elements of the two phrases, thereby disposing of the seeming tautology.

11. Children of the Most High who will live forever. See Mek 2, 272; and Yalkut Ps. 831. See, however, John 10:34, and Morton Smith, "The Image of God," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 40 (1958), 474-81.

12. "that ye" is apparently a misprint for "that Thou," the reading in W and SPR. The passage may also be translated: "that Thou clothe Thyself with divine might, as Thou didst clothe Thyself at Sinai." In the Hebrew a slight variation in the length of a letter determines whether the verb means "clothe Thyself" or "clothe them [the children of Israel]."

13. JV: *So God give thee of the dew*. In this comment, however, *God* is understood as the object of the verb "give"; and by means of a very bold pun the word *mīl*, "of the dew," is understood as the Aramaic infinitive of the verb *nīl*, "take." Cf. Gen. Rabbah 66:3, and Piska 11.7.

is alive and stands by His word. As R. Phinehas the Priest ben Hama explained: Even though those who conveyed the promises—the Prophets—are dead, yet God who made the promises is living and enduring.

My soul thirsteth for God . . . of the living: When shall I come and appear before God? (Ps. 42:3). Israel asked Him: Master of the universe, when wilt Thou restore to us the glory [which was ours] when during the three festal pilgrimages we would go up and see the face of the Presence? Indeed R. Isaac used to say: As it is said that they went up to Jerusalem to appear before God, so it may also be said that they went up to see Him,¹⁴ for the verse may be read *When shall I come and see*.¹⁵ [In regard to such experience of God] R. Joshua ben Levi used to say: "Why was the festive procession on the second evening of Tabernacles called the procession for drawing water? ¹⁶ Because thence, [out of the Temple in Jerusalem], the children of Israel drew and imbibed the holy spirit."¹⁷

Hence the children of Israel asked: When wilt Thou restore us to that glory? Behold how long a time since the House of our life was destroyed! It is already a week of years, already a cycle of seven weeks of years,¹⁸ already seven hundred and seventy-seven years. (And at this writing it is one thousand one hundred and fifty-one years).¹⁹ Oh, when again shall I come and see the face of God?

God answered them: My children, in this life how many times

14. I follow Friedmann's suggestion in n. 13 to reverse R. Isaac's statement, which in PE reads: "As it is said that they went up to Jerusalem to see God, so it may also be said that they went up to appear before Him."

15. A slight change in vowels brings about the change from the passive to the active of the verb "see."

16. As the water required for the many libations during the Festival was being drawn, Levites played on their flutes, and there were other festivities in the Temple in Jerusalem. See Suk 5:1.

17. See Gen. Rabbah 70:8.

18. On the messianic significance of a period of seven years and a period of seven weeks of years—a Jubilee, that is—see below, nn. 37 and 38.

19. Since the Temple was destroyed in 70 C.E., the first year referred to is 847 C.E., and the next 1221 C.E. Both dates I regard as copyists' glosses. Neither date is mentioned in Parma MS, which lacks Section 2 of this Piska.

a year did you go up in pilgrimage? Was it not three times a year? But when the time of redemption arrives, I Myself shall rebuild the House, and you will go up in pilgrimage not three times a year, but go up every New Moon and every Sabbath, as is said *And it shall come to pass that from one New Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before Me* (Isa. 66:23).

3. Another comment: *And it shall come to pass, that from one New Moon to another . . . shall all flesh come to worship before Me*. But how will it be possible for *all flesh* to come to Jerusalem every New Moon and every Sabbath? R. Levi explained: Jerusalem is destined to be [as large] as the Land of Israel, and the Land of Israel [as large] as the whole world.²⁰

But how can they come on the New Moon or the Sabbath from the end of the world? The clouds will come to carry the children of Israel and bring them to Jerusalem, where they will say the morning prayer in keeping with what the prophet said in praise of the children of Israel: *Who are these that fly as a cloud?* (Isa. 60:8).

In another comment, the words are read *And it shall come to pass, that once each New Moon*, etc. But consider what would happen if the New Moon fell on a Sabbath? Since Scripture says that the children of Israel are to come once each New Moon and once each Sabbath, how would it be possible for them to do so? In the name of R. Reuben, R. Phinehas the Priest ben Hama replied: They will come twice: once on account of the Sabbath, and once on account of the New Moon. In the early morning the clouds will carry them and bring them to Jerusalem where they will say the morning prayer, and then the clouds will carry them back to their homes; in the afternoon the clouds will again come for them and carry them back again to Jerusalem.²¹ *Who are these that fly as a cloud* refers to the morning flight. *And as the doves to their cotes* refers to the flight at the decline of day.

<All flesh shall come, etc.> The verse does not say "All Israel

20. Cf. Piska 21.8, and PRKM, p. 317.

21. "in the afternoon . . . back again to Jerusalem"—Parma MS.

shall come," but *All flesh shall come*. R. Phinehas²² taught: What is meant by *all flesh* (*bśr*)? It means "Everyone who restrains²³ (*bsr*) his evil Impulse in this world earns the right to behold the Face of the Presence." This interpretation is supported by what is written: *He that . . . shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil* (Isa. 33:15). What does Scripture go on to say to such a man? *Thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty* (Isa. 33:17).

Another comment: *All flesh shall come*—even the heathen. But not all the heathen. Only those who did not use Israel as slaves, them the Messiah will receive.

4. Now by what merit will Israel deserve all such honor as is spoken of above? By the merit of dwelling in the Land of Israel for which they longed as they dwelt among the nations of this world.

So, too, you find of the Patriarchs that they endured endless trouble for the sake of burial in the Land of Israel. Thus, apropos of R. Hanina's teaching that wherever the word "shekel" is used [without qualification] in the Pentateuch, a *sela'* is meant, in the Prophets a *litra* is meant, in the Writings a centenary,²⁴ R. Abba bar Yudan said in the name of R. Judah bar Simon, There is one exception, however: the shekels Abraham paid to Ephron for the burial ground which he bought from him—these were none other than centenaries:²⁵ *The piece of land cost four hundred shekels of silver* (Gen. 23:15). Just consider—four hundred centenaries of silver he gave for a burial plot!²⁶ So, too, Jacob. All the gold he had laid by throughout his life and all the money he possessed, he heaped up,²⁷ setting it before Esau to buy off

22. Parma MS: "R. Aḥa."

23. Parma MS margin has the gloss *h'wsm*, "that shuts up" or "binds up."

24. Cf. B.Bek 50a; a *litra* equals 25 *sela'*; a centenary equals 100 *sela'*.

25. The words "The numerical value of the letters in 'shekel' equals the numerical value of the letters in 'centenaries,'" which follow, are enclosed in parentheses in P and deleted in FT. They do not occur at all in Parma MS.

26. The idea that Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah with centenaries is apparently derived from his willingness to pay Ephron *with silver* [*shekels*] *at their highest value* (Gen. 23:9), which, according to R. Judah bar Simon, means with centenaries.

27. "he heaped up"—Parma MS.; P: "he turned over to him."

Esau's right to burial [in the family plot], so that Esau should not be brought into it for burial. To this buying off of Esau Jacob made reference when he said, *In my grave in the land of Canaan which I got for myself with a heap*²⁸ [of gold], *there shalt thou bury me* (Gen. 50:5). Further, you find that at the time of his departure from the world, Jacob, adjuring Joseph, said to him: *Bury me not, I pray thee, in Egypt* (Gen. 47:29). And why the longing to be buried in the Land of Israel? R. Ḥanina said: There is a reason for it. R. Jose said: There is a reason for it. Resh Lakish explained in the name of R. Eliezer haḲ-Ḳappar: The reason is that in the days of the Messiah the dead of the Land of Israel will be the first to come to life.²⁹ This coming to life is what David had in mind when he said, *O that I might walk before the Lord in the lands of the living* (Ps. 116:9). Now, is the Land of Israel really the land of the living? Do not men die in it? For that matter, cannot the world outside the Land of Israel be more accurately called "the land of the living"?³⁰ As for the Land of Israel—in it people dying [of hunger] are common. However, when David spoke of *the lands of the living* he meant the Land whose dead will be the first to come to life³¹ in the days of the Messiah.

5. R. Ammi³² asked Resh Lakish: Even such dead as Jeroboam the son of Nebat?³³ He replied: Brimstone and salt. R. Ḥelbo asked R. Ammi: Such as Jeroboam the son of Nebat? He replied: I asked Resh Lakish and he said to me, Brimstone and salt. R. Berechiah asked R. Ḥelbo: Such as Jeroboam the son of Nebat?

28. JV: *In my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan*. But the word *krh* may mean either "heap up" or "dig"; and Jacob, the commentator maintains, was no digger of graves. See Gen. Rabbah 100:5; Exod. Rabbah 31:17; and Rashi on Gen. 46:6.

29. "will be the first to come to life"—so ZA, and P.Kil 9:3, 32c. PR: "will come alive."

30. Lands such as Tyre which enjoyed great abundance and low prices. See P.Kil 9:3, 32c.

31. See above, n. 29.

32. "R. Ammi"—so SPR, and so emended by Friedmann. Parma MS and PE read "R. Jose."

33. According to Jewish tradition, he seduced Israel to idolatry. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, Index, s.v.

He replied: I asked R. Ammi, and he said to me, I asked Resh Lakish, and he replied likewise, saying to me: Brimstone and salt.

R. Berechiah said: To explain what the teachers were holding back³⁴ in their enigmatic reply of "Brimstone," [we would say:] With brimstone and salt the Holy One, blessed be He, intends to inflict punishment upon the wicked in Gehenna. But [upon the wicked buried in the Land of Israel such punishment had already been inflicted] at the time when the Temple was destroyed.³⁵ As R. Judah ben R. Il'a'i³⁶ said: For seven years the Land of Israel burned with brimstone and salt, for it is said *The whole Land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and a burning* (Deut. 29:22).³⁷ And, on this account, said R. Jose ben Halafta,³⁸ for fifty-two years after the destruction of the Temple³⁸ no one passed through the Land of Israel, as is written *For the mountains will I take up a weeping and a wailing . . . because they are burned up, so that none passeth through . . . both the fowl of the heavens and the beast are fled and gone* (Jer. 9:9). The Land burned with the fire that was thrown upon it, as is written *From on high hath*

34. Parma MS: "what the teachers had in mind." The word 'yn at the beginning of the sentence is construed as the Aramic equivalent of the Hebrew 'm, "if." The translation of this passage is in part uncertain, and the text may be corrupt.

35. See Piska 2.6; and MTeh 79:3,4.

36. R. Berechiah lived in Palestine in the fourth century, while R. Judah ben R. Il'a'i and R. Jose ben Halafta, pupils of R. 'Aqiba, lived in the second century. It follows that the three could not be interlocutors, but that R. Berechiah, the Amora, quoted the two Tannaim to support his assertion that for a certain period of time the Land of Israel was on fire. See William G. Braude, "Overlooked Meanings of Certain Editorial Terms in the Pesikta Rabbati," *JQR*, 52 (1961-62), 264-72.

37. This tradition is derived from Scripture in the following manner: The covenant of the Lord which the children of Israel forsook (Deut. 29:24) will turn the Land of Israel into brimstone and salt. But for how long? For a period of seven years, as intimated by Dan. 9:27: *And the [consequences of the forsaken] covenant shall cause the many enemies to prevail for a week of years* (JV: *And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week*). See B. Yoma 54a, and Rashi.

38. The destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar took place in 586 B.C.E.; the order of Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem was issued in 534 B.C.E. Hence 52 years. See B. Yoma 54a, and Rashi; B. Meğ 11b; and Sefer 'Olam Rabbah, chap. 27 (ed. Ratner, p. 123)

He sent fire into my bones (Lam. 1:13). Accordingly, the punishment which God ordained for Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his companions, He had exacted in the seven years that the Land of Israel was burning with fire. You may therefore conclude that even Jeroboam the son of Nebat and his companions will come to life in the days of the Messiah. And what is the cause of their deliverance from being punished in Gehenna and their coming back to life? Burial in the Land of Israel, <as is said *His Land will work expiation for His people* (Deut. 32:43).>³⁹

6. R. Huna the Priest ben Abin said in the name of R. Abba ben Zemina⁴⁰ that R. Helbo and R. Hama bar Hanina differed on this point. R. Helbo maintained that he who dies outside the Land and is buried outside the Land has two agonies to contend with—the agony⁴¹ of dying and the agony of burial.⁴² For it is written of Pashhur: *Thou, Pashhur, and all that dwell in thy house shall go into captivity; and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and there shalt thou be buried* (Jer. 20:6). And R. Hama bar Hanina taught: If a man dies outside the Land, but [after having been buried] is brought from outside the Land and reburied in the Land, he has only the agony of death to contend with. How then does R. Hama bar Hanina interpret the words *There thou shalt die, and there shalt thou be buried*? As implying that reburial in the Land of Israel would have made expiation for Pashhur?⁴³

As R[abbah] ben Kīrye and R. Eleazar⁴⁴ ben Pēḏaṭ were

39. Directly before these words God is described as taking revenge upon His enemies. If the end of the verse is read *But His Land will make expiation for His people*, there would appear to be no connection between the two parts of the verse. Consequently the commentator construes the verse to say that while God will Himself punish His heathen adversaries, He will let the Land do its expiatory work more slowly and more mercifully for the sinners among the people of Israel. See B. Ket. 111a, where the Land of Israel is likened in its expiatory work to an altar made of earth. JV: *and doth make expiation for the Land of His people*.

40. So Parma MS; PE: "Yemina."

41. So Parma MS; PE: "agonies."

42. Presumably even if he were later reburied in the Land of Israel.

43. See P. Kil 9:3, 32c. But Pashhur, who was to die and remain buried in Babylon, could not expect such expiation.

44. So Parma MS; PE: "R. Barokia and R. Eliezer."

strolling in a grove [on the outskirts of Tiberias],⁴⁵ some coffins arrived from outside the Land. Thereupon R[abbah] ben Ḳirye⁴⁶ asked R. Eleazar: "What good will their return do those who while alive left the Land, and, now dead, have had themselves fetched back?" "What you imply is not right," replied R. Eleazar,⁴⁷ "for as soon as they are buried in the Land of Israel or even a handful of soil of the Land of Israel is placed upon them, it will make expiation for them, as is said *And His Land shall make expiation for His people*" (Deut. 32:43).

Does this statement mean that the righteous outside the Land will lose out? No! Why not? Because, as R. Eleazar, citing R. Simai, went on to say, God will make underground passages for the righteous who, rolling through them like skin bottles, will get to the Land of Israel, and when they get to the Land of Israel, God will restore their breath to them, as is said *He that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that go through it* (Isa. 42:5).⁴⁸ As a matter of fact, in Ezekiel there is an explicit verse on this point: *Ye shall know that I am the Lord when I open your graves* (Ezek. 37:13), *and bring you into the Land of Israel* (Ezek. 37:12). In that hour, *I will put My spirit in you, and ye shall live* (Ezek. 37:14). You thus learn that in the days of the Messiah the dead of the Land of Israel are to be [at once] among the living; and that the righteous [dead] outside the Land are to get to it and come to life upon it.

But when the [heathen] nations of the earth bury [their dead] in the Land, shall they also come to life? No! Isaiah said: *The neighbor shall not say: I too have suffered pain. The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity* (Isa. 33:24). By these

45. Parma MS reads *hyulsyys* or *h'lsyys*, which, at the suggestion of Professor Morton Smith of Columbia University, I take to be the Greek word *alsos*, "grove." See also Saul Lieberman in *Tarbis*, 3 (5692/1932), 208, who proposes "the glass works (*hyalosis*) outside of Tiberias." P reads *'ylps*, which Friedmann emends to *'ylf*, "ship," and therefore reads: "As R. Barokia and R. Eliezer ben Pēdaṭ were journeying on a ship, some coffins," etc. The parallel in Gen. Rabbah 96 (TA, pp. 1198-99) reads: "at the gateway of the city of Tiberias."

46. So Parma MS; PE: "R. Barokia."

47. So Parma MS; PE: "R. Eliezer."

48. See P. Ket 12:3, 35b; and Piska 31.10.

words he meant: My wicked neighbors shall not say, "We too [have suffered] and so have been sweetened;"⁴⁹ we shall therefore come to life with the children of Israel." No indeed! Only they who were of the people rightfully dwelling in the Land will be forgiven their iniquity. Indeed of what people has it been said that their iniquity will be forgiven? They who were told *Who is like unto thee, whose iniquity is pardoned, seeing that the Lord passeth by the transgression committed by the remnant of His heritage?*⁵⁰ (Micah 7:18).

7. And how long to the days of the Messiah?⁵¹ R. 'Aqiba said: Forty years, for it is said *And He afflicted thee, and suffered*

49. Parma MS: *nī'dnnw*, "we have been sweetened." PE has *nī'rḥnw*, usually translated "we have been mingled," which may also be taken as "we have been sweetened."

50. Apparently a deliberate reversal of a verse which in JV is addressed to God.

51. Usually translated "How many are the days of the Messiah?" But I prefer to follow the suggestion of Yehudah Eben Shēmu'el, according to whom the years 40, 400, 600, 1000, and so on—mentioned in the text—refer not to the length of the messianic era, but to the period of time at the end of which the Messiah might be expected to come. R. 'Aqiba compares the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. to the beginning of the wanderings in the wilderness of Sinai: even as the wanderings in Sinai lasted 40 years, so the period of subjugation to Rome was to last 40 years. With such a 40-year period in mind the Jews of Egypt, Cyrene, and Cyprus rose against the Romans in 115 C.E.; and Simon bar Koseba led his insurrection in 132 C.E.

In 433 C.E. Attila the Hun made himself emperor of Rome—an event which led many Romans to predict that Rome would come to an end in 447 C.E., in keeping with the local tradition that Rome was to last no more than 1200 years. At the same time, by calculations of their own, the Jews predicted that Rome would fall in the year 470, exactly 400 years after the destruction of the Temple, a period of time equal in length to the 400 years of servitude in Egypt—a parallel which R. Eliezer notes. In this connection the advice given by R. Hanina is significant. He says: "Any time after 400 years from the destruction of the Temple, if a man [in Rome] should offer you a field worth 1000 denar for one denar—do not take it" (B.AZ 9b).

Furthermore, according to a tradition cited by R. Ishmael in the name of his father, R. Jose ben Halafta, the power of Rome reached Jerusalem 180 years before the destruction of the Temple (B.Shab 15a). The year 433 C.E., in which Attila made himself master of Rome, would thus approximate the end of 600 years of Roman overlordship, the maximum time Israel, like the sycamore tree, could stay alive though buried, so to speak, in the earth. This 600-year period is mentioned by R. Berechiah who lived in the fourth century.

thee to hunger (Deut. 8:3); and then it is written *Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us* (Ps. 90:15). Even as by the affliction referred to in the preceding passage forty years are meant, so, too, by the affliction referred to here forty years are meant. R. Abin noted: What is R. 'Aḳiḅa's proof from Scripture? The verse *As in the days of thy coming forth out of the land of Egypt will I show unto him marvelous things* (Micah 7:15).⁵² R. Eliezer said: It will be four hundred years, as is written *that thy seed shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years* (Gen. 15:13); and then it is written *Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us* (Ps. 90:15). R. Berechiah said in the name of the elder R. Dosa: It will be six hundred years, for it is written *As the days of a tree shall be the days of My people* (Isa. 65:22).⁵³ What tree is meant? The tree whose stump endures for six hundred years [namely, the sycamore].⁵³ And R. Eliezer said in the name of R. Jose the Galilean: It will be a thousand years, for it is written *A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday* (Ps. 90:4); and then it is written *The day of vengeance was in My heart, but now My year of redemption is come* (Isa. 63:4), the day of the Holy One, blessed be He, being equal to a thousand mortal

In the post-Hadrianic era, R. Eliezer ben R. Jose the Galilean was inclined to defer the year of redemption for 1000 years; even before the debacle at Bethar, R. Joshua said that redemption would be slow in coming—it might not come for 2000 years. R. Judah, loyal to Rome and anxious to discourage rebellion, resorted to an astronomical number, 365,000 years (see Yehudah Eben Shēmu'el, *Midrāše gē'ulah*, 2d ed. [Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 5714/1954], Introduction, pp. 42-46, 144-46). By deliberate exaggeration, he may have intended to ridicule all such calculations.

Some of these explanations of the several periods are my own elaborations of Yehudah Eben Shēmu'el's interesting suggestion.

With regard to the usual translation of the question at the beginning of this Section, "How many are the days of the Messiah?" and the answers which follow, Louis Ginzberg writes as follows: "This statement very likely implies the doctrine that the messianic kingdom will be confined to the Holy Land, whose dead will therefore be resurrected 40 years [or 400 years, and so on] before the general resurrection, when the Lord Himself will be king and ruler." See his *Legends*, 5, 363.

52. The context of the passage is messianic.

53. See Gen. Rabbah 12:6 and Kil 1:8.

years. And R. Joshua said: It will be two thousand years, for it is said *according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us* (Ps. 90:15). Now by *days* no fewer than two days are meant, and a day of the Holy One, blessed be He, is a thousand years. And R. Abbahu said: It will be seven thousand years, as is said *As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee* (Isa. 62:5). Now how long is the bridegroom's rejoicing over the bride? Seven days.⁵⁴ And a day of the Holy One, blessed be He, is a thousand years. But Rabbi [Judah] said: You can hardly count the years, they are so many. [Consider the verse] *For the day of vengeance that was in My heart, and My year of redemption are come* (Isa. 63:4). How long then to the days of the Messiah? 365,000 years to the days of the Messiah.⁵⁵

And the dead of the Land of Israel, children of Israel, will come alive in the days of the Messiah and will enjoy them. Thereupon all the righteous outside the Land will come by [underground] passages into it. And as soon as they come into it, the Holy One, blessed be He, will restore their souls to them, and they will arise and enjoy the days of the Messiah with those already come alive in the Land, as is said *He that spread forth the Land, and those who had come out of it, He giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that come through it* (Isa. 42:5).

How can one tell when the king Messiah is coming? R. 'Aqiba⁵⁶ said: Near the days of the Messiah ten territories will be swallowed up, ten territories will be overturned, ten territories will have their inhabitants put to death. And R. Hiyya bar Abba said: The king Messiah will not come except in a dog-faced⁵⁷ generation. R. Eliezer said: In a generation that deserves extermination will the king Messiah come. And R. Levi said: Close to the days of the Messiah a great event will befall the world.

54. Cf. Gen. 29:27; Judg. 14:17.

55. The two parts of Isa. 63:4 appear to be inconsistent: "if the expected time is to be a day, why should it be spoken of as a year? If a year, why is it described as a day?" The inconsistency is reconciled by asserting that the verse speaks of a year of God's days—and God's day, as stated directly above, is 1000 years. Hence 365 times 1,000.

56. "R. 'Aqiba"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Eleazar."

57. That is, brazen and brutalized. Cf. Piska 15.15.

PISKA 2

SUMMARY

The kindling of the Hanukkah
lamp within the house, and the
kindling of aspiration within
David's heart

In a time of danger, when a man is constrained to kindle the Hanukkah lamp within his house instead of outdoors, he must take care to do no work by the light of this lamp. The Hasmonean Hanukkah calls for the reading of the *Hallel* (Psalms 113-118) and commemorates one of a series of seven notable events, including the building of the First Temple (Secs. 1-2).

As at times a man may find it necessary to kindle the Hanukkah lights within his house, so David had to keep kindled within his heart the aspiration to build the Temple—an aspiration which could not be fulfilled. Yet because it was his aspiration to build the Temple, God gave him the privilege of singing from the grave a song at the dedication of the Temple that his son Solomon was to build. Only to men as holy as David is such a privilege granted (Sec. 3).

When God did not allow the fulfillment of David's aspiration to build the Temple, He promised him that Psalms composed by him would for ever be sung in the Temple, and that, indeed, the building of it would be ascribed to him—*the House of David* (Ps. 30) (Sec. 4).

Why was David's aspiration not allowed fulfillment? Not because of the wars he fought—those wars were approved. According to one authority, the wars were sacred wars, and David had been charged to fight them. The reason David's aspiration went unfulfilled was that if he had built the Temple, it could never—because of his righteousness—have been destroyed. If so, then when Israel sinned, God could not have cooled His wrath by destruction of the Temple, an act which delivered Israel from death.

The Piska concludes by repeating the seven notable events marked

by *hanukkah*—rites of dedication culminating in the kindling of lights (Secs. 5-6).

A Psalm; a song at the dedication of the House; of David
(Ps. 30:1).¹

1. Let our master instruct us: The lamp of Hanukkah, during what period of time² is one required, according to law, to light it? Our masters taught: From the time the sun sets until nearly everyone has left the market place.³ And where is the lamp kindled? If a man lives in an upper story from which a window overhangs a public thoroughfare, he kindles [the lamp at the window]. In a time of danger,⁴ however, [such as the time of Hadrian's persecution], he may kindle it within his house, but it is forbidden to do work by its light. R. Assi said: It is forbidden to use its light to see by.

And why are lamps kindled during Hanukkah? At the time that the sons of the Hasmonean, the High Priest, triumphed over the kingdom of Greece—the time referred to in the verse *When . . . I raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece* (Zech. 9:13)—upon entering the Temple they found there rods⁵ of iron which they grooved out⁶ and then kindled wicks in the oil which they poured into the grooves.⁷ And why is the *Hallel*⁸

1. Psalm 30 used to be read in the synagogue during the week of Hanukkah. See Sof 18:2, Tur 'Orah hayyim 133, and Abudarham (Jerusalem, 5719/1959), p. 203.

2. Or, "at what time."

3. About half an hour. See Maimonides, *Code*, III, x, iv, 5 (YJS, 14, 469); and cf. R. Asher on B. Shab 21b.

4. So correctly explained by H. M. Pineles, *Darkah Iel Torah* (Vienna, 1861), p. 47. See also Saul Lieberman, in *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 7 (1939-44), 427.

5. So Parma MS; PE: "eight rods."

6. See Jastrow, p. 1311.

7. See Gedaliah Alon in *Sinai*, 12 (5703/1943), 33; reprinted in his *Mehkarim be-tolēdoṯ Yisra'el* (Tel Aviv, 1957), p. 24.

8. Psalms 113-18, as used for liturgical recitation on Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles, Hanukkah, and the New Moon.

read? Because [one of the Psalms included in the *Hallel*] declares *The Lord is God, and hath given us light* (Ps. 118:27). Then why is it not read on Purim, when, as Scripture records, [the right was granted to the Jews] *To destroy, and to slay, and to cause to perish, all the forces of the people and province that would assault them* (Esther 8:11)? If the *Hallel* is read on Hanukkah, why should it not also be read on Purim? ⁹ Because the *Hallel* is not read except on the overthrow of a kingdom, and since the kingdom of Ahasuerus continued, therefore the *Hallel* is not read. But as for the kingdom of Greece which the Holy One, blessed be He, did destroy, the Jews proceeded to give voice to the *Hallel*, a hymn of praise, saying: In times past we were servants to Pharaoh, servants to Greece; but now we are servants to the Holy One, blessed be He: *Praise, O ye servants of the Lord* (Ps. 113:1).

2. And how many hanukkahs—events marked by rites of dedication—are there? Seven hanukkahs, as follows: the hanukkah of heaven and of earth, as it is said *And the heaven and the earth were finished* (Gen. 2:1), this hanukkah being observed when “God set [the two great lights] in the firmament of heaven to give light upon the earth” (Gen. 1:17). And the hanukkah of the wall [enclosing the city], of which it is said *At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem . . . they sought the Levites . . . to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness* (Neh. 12:27). And the hanukkah of those who returned from Babylonian captivity, as is said *The children of Israel . . . and the . . . children of the captivity . . . offered at the dedication of this House of our God*¹⁰ (Ezra 6:17). And the Hanukkah of the [Hasmonean] priests, the one for which we kindle lamps. And the hanukkah of the world-to-come, of which it is said *When I free Jerusalem, [it shall be] with lamps*¹¹ (Zeph. 1:12). And the hanukkah of the princes, as is said *This was the dedication*

9. “If the *Hallel* . . . not also be read on Purim?”—Parma MS.

10. MT: *this House of God*.

11. The passage deals with the coming day of the Lord's wrath—the time of judgment upon mankind. See Piska 8.

offering of the altar . . . at the hands of the princes of Israel (Num. 7:84). And the hanukkah of the First Temple, for which we have *A Psalm; a song at the dedication of the House; of David* (Ps. 30:1), a Psalm read also to commemorate [the Hanukkah of the Hasmonean priests].¹²

3. *A Psalm; a song at the dedication of the House; of David.* R. Tanhuma bar R. Abba began his discourse as follows: ¹³ *Holy men exult in glory; they sing for joy upon their beds* (Ps. 149:5). On account of what glory will men who are holy presume to exult? On account of the glory which the Holy One, blessed be He, bestows upon them at the time of their departure from the world. In the world's use, when a man dies, his sons, if he has sons, attend him. But the Holy One, blessed be He, would not have it only thus,¹⁴ for as R. Isaac said: The Holy One Himself, blessed be He, attends the holy. And the proof? *Thy righteous one*¹⁵ *shall go before thee* (Isa. 58:8), that is, the Righteous One of the world, for the verse goes on to say *the glory of the Lord shall gather thee up* (*ibid.*).

In a similar vein the elder R. Hiyya said: When a holy man leaves this world, three companies of angels attend him: one saying *Let him come in peace* (Isa. 57:2); another saying *Let him rest in his bed*¹⁶ (*ibid.*); and another walking before him in silence, as the verse concludes, *walking before him* (*ibid.*).

R. Judah bar Simon said in the name of R. Josiah: If one dare

12. Literally "a Psalm read in keeping with the theme of the day," or "a Psalm prescribed as the lesson for the day."

13. In Sections 3 and 4 which follow, R. Tanhuma will demonstrate that *A Psalm*, as well as *the House* are to be construed as antecedents of the phrase of *David*, so that in effect Ps. 30:1 reads *A Psalm of David . . . at the dedication of the House of David*.

14. On the basis of a parallel reading in Yalkuṭ Ps. 889, Mah and Friedmann emend the text, substituting for "the Holy One, blessed be He" the word "holy," and read: "But with the holy it is not so."

15. JV: *Thy righteousness*. But, depending upon its vocalization, the word *šdk* may mean either "righteousness" or "righteous."

16. So P, FT, Yalkuṭ Isa. 487, and Yalkuṭ Ps. 889 (ed. Saloniki); MT: *Let them rest in their beds*. Cf. Luke 16:22.

assert such a thing, the Holy One Himself, blessed be He, says to a holy man: *Let him come in peace* (*ibid.*). That God speaks thus is an inference drawn from what happens to the wicked, to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, says: There is no peace for you; as is written *There is no peace, saith my God to the wicked* (Isa. 57:21). Now if God with His own mouth says *No peace to the wicked*, all the more reason to suppose that God Himself says to a holy man *Let him come in peace*. Hence Scripture: *Holy men exult in glory* (Ps. 149:5), in the glory, that is, which God bestows upon them at the time of their removal from the world.

In further comment on the verse in the Psalm, [R. Tanhuma asked]: What is meant by *They sing for joy upon their beds* (Ps. 149:5)? That there they sing praises to the Holy One, blessed be He.¹⁷ For, as R. Hama bar R. Jose said: The only difference between the holy¹⁸ who are alive and the holy who are dead is that the holy who are dead¹⁹ do not have the power of speech. However, in the beyond when the souls of the holy are in a treasury of life,²⁰ as a holy man was assured in the verse *The soul of my lord shall be stored in a treasury of life* (1 Sam. 25:29), the holy who are dead are able to sing praise to the Holy One, blessed be He. Hence of holy men in the beyond the Psalmist says that *they sing for joy*. In this context *sing for joy* means the

17. The verse is construed as referring to life in the beyond, because in this life men do not ordinarily sing for joy upon their beds. Cf. [Piska 50.1].

18. "the holy"—MTeh 30:3; and Yalkuṭ Ps. 781 and 889. PE: "between those who are alive," etc.

19. The Rabbis were troubled by such statements in Job and Ecclesiastes as *The dead know not anything* (Eccles. 9:5), which seemed to imply that there was no immortality. Accordingly the Rabbis asserted that the author of Ecclesiastes meant only the wicked who even when alive are called dead, whereas the holy continue to possess both perception and knowledge even after they die, lacking only the power of speech, the means of communicating with the living. See Piskas 12.1, [50.1]; and Eccles. Rabbah on 9:5. I am indebted to Professor Mordecai Margulies for this note.

20. "when the souls of the holy are in a treasury of life"—Parma MS and Yalkuṭ Ps. 781 and 889. Friedmann, interpolating the phrase "who put," reads: "in the beyond the holy are able to sing praise to the Holy One, blessed be He, who put their souls in a treasury . . . a treasury of life."

singing of praise to God, as may be seen from the verse *The voice of joyous singing at salvation is in the tents of holy men* (Ps. 118:15).

4. Another comment: *They sing for joy*, etc. How can it be said of them who are sleeping upon their beds in the beyond that they are singing for joy? R. Johanan explained: Whenever an elder expounding from a teacher's chair says: "Thus taught R. 'Aqiba," or "Thus taught R. Simeon ben Yoḥai," the lips of such Sages in the beyond move; the elder's citation of their words has the power of *Moving gently the lips of those that are asleep* (Song 7:10), so that it may be said of them *They sing for joy upon their beds* (Ps. 149:5). [And so R. Tanḥuma concluded]: The thought of his own singing from the beyond was in David's mind when he said: *Let me dwell in Thy tent for ever* (Ps. 61:5), for could he possibly have meant by this prayer that he hoped to live for ever? If not, why should he have said such a thing as *Let me dwell in Thy tent for ever*? What he really meant was: May it be [Thy] will that my lips will be moving, will move for ever, because [in Thy tents]—in houses of prayer as well as in houses of study—men will speak continually in my name. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Upon thy life, even though thou diest, never shall thy name remove from My House—at every sacrifice, thy name will be remembered, and there will be sung Psalms of thine, beginning *A Psalm of David*. Nay more: because thou didst consider building the Sanctuary—even though Solomon thy son is the one who will build it—I shall attribute its building to thee: *A Psalm and song at the dedication of the House of David*.

5. Another comment: *A Psalm and song at the dedication of the House of David*. One verse quotes [God as saying to David]: *Art thou going to build Me a House?* (2 Sam. 7:5).²¹ But another

21. The question is understood as implying the possibility of an affirmative reply. Cf. 1 Sam. 2:27. However, the first words may also be construed as *h' 'th*. The verse would then read "Behold thou art," etc.

verse quotes [Him as saying to David]: *Thou shalt not build Me a House* (1 Chron. 17:4). What is this—a contradiction? If not, how am I to reconcile the two verses? The words *Thou shalt not build Me a House* mean, to be sure, that thou wilt not build it; but the question *Art thou going to build Me a House?* implies that [though thou wilt not build it], thy son will.

⟨Thou didst put thy honor before My honor. Only after thou didst behold thyself dwelling in a house of cedarwood, didst thou seek means²² of building the Temple. But thy son Solomon will put My honor before his honor, as is said *In the eleventh year . . . was the House [of God] finished* (1 Kings 6:38). Only after it was finished do we read of Solomon that he *was building his own house* (1 Kings 7:1).⟩

⟨Another comment: The question *Art thou going to build?* implies that thou wilt lay the foundations of the House; but the words *Thou shalt not build* imply that thou will not finish it.⟩²³

Another comment: The words *Thou shalt not build* imply that thou wilt not build the Temple; while the question *Art thou going to build?* ⟨implies that the Temple will be called after thy name;⟩ because had it not been for thee, the fire would not have come down to the altar.²⁴ How so? After the Temple was

22. See Piska 6.7.

23. On the basis of the parallel in Yalkuṭ Sam. 144, whose source is PR, Friedmann interpolates one paragraph, and transposes the other from its place at the end of the passage below in P, where it follows the words "the fire would not come down from heaven." See also Song Rabbah 1:6. David, as is well known, made all the preparations for the building of the Temple. See 1 Chron. 28.2.

24. See Piska 4.2. "Upon 12 occasions did God send down a divine fire upon earth, six times as a token of honor and distinction, but as many times as a punishment. To the first class belong the fire at the consecration of the Tabernacle; at the offering of Gideon, as at that of Manoah and of David; at the dedication of Solomon's Temple; and at the offering of Elijah upon Mount Carmel" (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3, 244-45; 5, 135).

The fire finally came down on the altar of Solomon's Temple, where, until removed by Manasseh, it is said to have remained in the shape of a fiery lion (see B.Yoma 21b and Rashi). According to R. Samuel Edels, the lion's shape was meant to represent the emblem of the Tribe of Judah. See also Piska 47.3, and n. 19 thereto; and Piska 27/28.1.

built, how many prayers did Solomon keep composing because the fire would not come down from heaven? ²⁵ As R. Ḥelbo said in the name of the school of R. Shela: Not until Solomon went and brought the coffin of David his father, and said to God: "Master of worlds! If I have no deeds, do it because of the good deeds of David my father," did the fire at once come down from heaven, as is said *O Lord God, turn not away the face of Thine anointed; remember the good deeds of David Thy servant* (2 Chron. 6:42). And what follows in the text? *Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven . . . and the glory of the Lord filled the House* (2 Chron. 7:1).

And if you cannot deduce from this verse that Solomon brought up the coffin of David from his grave,²⁶ R. Berechiah stated in the name of R. Ḥelbo, who had it from the school of R. Shela, that an explicit verse—David's saying *I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast raised me up*, etc., *O Lord, Thou broughtest up my life*²⁷ *from the nether world* (Ps. 30:2,4)—supports the tradition.

Therefore Solomon said: Since it is because of the merit of David my father that the Holy One, blessed be He, sent down the fire, behold I shall sing in my father's name the song of the dedication of the House: *A Psalm and song at the dedication of the House of David*.²⁸

6. Another comment: *A Psalm and song at the dedication*. Just see! Solomon builds the House, and yet it is called after the name of David! Indeed David deserved to build it. For a certain reason, however, [which will be stated presently], he was not allowed to build it. Even though he had intended to build it, Nathan the prophet came and in the name of God said to him, "Thou shalt not build a House for Me." "Why not?" "*Because thou hast*

25. A deduction made from the fact that at the dedication of the Temple Solomon prayed at considerable length. See 2 Chron. chap. 6; MTch 24.10; and Piska 6.5.

26. See Tanhuma B, Exod., p. 22.

27. MT: *my soul*.

28. Eccles. Rabbah 4:2 states that David himself, restored to life for the dedication of the Temple, composed the rest of the Psalm.

shed much blood upon the earth before Me" (1 Chron. 22:8). When David heard this, he grew afraid, saying: "Behold, I am deemed unfit to build the Temple." According to R. Judah bar Il'a'i, the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "David, be not afraid. As thou livest, in My sight thou art deemed as innocent in shedding the blood of the nations thou didst vanquish as in shedding the blood of a gazelle or of a hart." In the words *thou hast shed much blood upon the earth*, the superfluous phrase *upon the earth* hints at the analogy with a gazelle and a hart, of the killing of which it is said *The unclean and the clean may eat . . . of the gazelle, and . . . of the hart. Only ye shall not eat the blood; thou shalt pour it out upon the earth* (Deut. 12:15, 16).

According to another tradition, the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "As thou livest, in My sight all the blood thou didst shed is deemed as offerings." For, as R. Simeon ben Yohai says, in the words *thou hast shed much blood upon the earth before Me*, the phrase *before Me* hints at offerings, as in the verse *And he shall kill the bullock before the Lord* (Lev. 1:5).²⁹ David said: If Thou so deemest, then why may I not build the House? The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: If thou shouldst build it, it will endure and never be destroyed. David exclaimed: How wonderful! The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: It is revealed and known to Me that Israel are destined to sin; whereat, so that Israel be delivered from death, I will destroy the Temple and thereby cool My wrath, for thus Scripture: *Upon the Tabernacle of the daughter of Zion He hath poured out His fury like fire* (Lam. 2:4).³⁰ The Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say to David: As thou livest, since thou didst intend to build the House, even though Solomon thy son will actually build it, I will nevertheless ascribe it to thy name: *A Psalm and song at the dedication of the House of David*.

29. According to both R. Judah and R. Simeon, the heathen nations involved in these wars had previously spread murder and rapine throughout the Land of Israel, and therefore met with just retribution at the hands of David. But while R. Judah taught that David's wars were merely permitted, R. Simeon maintained that they were sacred wars.

30. See Piska 1.5.

Another comment: *A Psalm*, etc. Seven events are marked by hanukkah—by a rite of dedication: The dedication at the creation of the world, in connection with which it is written *The heavens were finished* (Gen. 2:1), for, like the word “finished” in the verse “Thus was finished all the work of the Tabernacle” (Exod. 39:32), here also the word *finished* can indicate nothing other than an occasion marked by a rite of dedication; the dedication carried out by Moses, as set forth in the passage beginning with the words *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had finished setting up the Tabernacle* (Num. 7:1); the dedication of the First Temple, of which it is written *A Psalm and song at the dedication of the House of David* (Ps. 30:1); the dedication of the Second Temple, as is said *And they offered at the dedication of this House of God* (Ezra 6:17); the dedication of the wall [enclosing the city], of which it is said *At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem . . . they sought the Levites out . . . to bring them to Jerusalem, to keep the dedication with gladness* (Neh. 12:27); the dedication which we are now considering, the Hanukkah instituted by the Hasmonean family; and finally the dedication of the world-to-come, which also is to be celebrated with the light of lamps, as is written *Moreover the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold*, etc. (Isa. 30:26).

PISKA 3

SUMMARY

Obedience to the ordinances
of the elders in regard to
Hanukkah and other matters

Oil set aside for a Hanukkah lamp may not be used for any other purpose—so ordained the elders. And even though it was not God but only the elders who ordained Hanukkah, let no man make little of it, since God Himself obeys the elders' decrees, which, though not mentioned in the Torah, ultimately come from Him. Therefore practices based on rulings of the elders call for benedictions as though such practices were enjoined in Scripture (Secs. 1-2).

Words of the Sages can be as fateful as the touch of a glowing coal, as evident from the effect of Abraham's words with Lot. Because the Patriarch and Sage asked Lot to separate himself from him, the result was the ban of marriage between the children of Abraham and the children of Lot (Sec. 3).

Jacob also spoke fateful words. He had divine authority to declare Manasseh and Ephraim fathers of their respective Tribes, but in his words of blessing gave precedence to Ephraim and thus to the Tribe descended from him.

This fateful blessing came at the conclusion of a series of answers to such questions as the following: Why did Joseph refrain from being alone with his father during his entire stay in Egypt? Why did Jacob make an effort to sit up in his bed when Joseph came in? How did God inform Jacob that Manasseh and Ephraim were to father Tribes? Why was Rachel not brought to burial in Hebron, but buried near Ramah instead? Why was the holy spirit withdrawn from Jacob at certain times during his deathbed encounter with Joseph? How did Joseph seek to prevent his father from giving precedence to Ephraim? Finally, why did Ephraim receive such precedence? (Secs. 4-5).

*On the eighth day . . . the . . .
prince of the children of Manasseh
(Num. 7:54).¹*

1. Let our master instruct us: Suppose a Hanukkah lamp has some oil left over in it, what is to be done with the oil? ² In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim,³ our Masters taught as follows: If a Hanukkah lamp has oil left over in it after the first day, one adds oil to the lamp and lights it on the second day. If oil is left over after the second day, one adds more oil to the lamp and lights it on the third day; and so on for the successive days. But if on the eighth day some oil is still left, one makes a fire of the oil and burns it by itself. Why so? Because the oil was set aside for a religious purpose, and hence it is forbidden to make use of it [for any other purpose].

No man should say: In matters such as these I will not obey the elders' commands, since such commands are not to be found in the Torah. To a man who does say such a thing, the Holy One, blessed be He, replies: No, My son! Whatever laws the elders decree for you, obey, for it is said that you are to act *According to the law which they shall teach thee* (Deut. 17:11). Even ⁴ for Me they decree things, as is said *Whenever thou decreest a thing, He shall obey thee* ⁵ (Job 22:28).

An instance of such obedience you can see for yourself in the story of Jacob. What does Scripture say of the occasion when Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh? *He set Ephraim before Manasseh* (Gen. 48:20). That is, Jacob decreed that the younger son be set before the older, and this decree was carried out.

1. Num. 7:54-59 is the lesson in the Torah on the morning of the eighth day of Hanukkah. See Sof 20:10.

2. After the time specified for burning elapsed, the lamp went out, leaving some oil in it.

3. "In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim"—Parma MS.

4. On *Imh š*—in the sense of "because" or "even"—see Mordecai Margulies, *ha-Hillukim šeb-ben 'anše Mizrah u-bēne 'Ereš Yisra'el* (Jerusalem, 5698/1938), p. 38.

5. Cf. Piska 17.2.

When? At the time of the princes' offerings the Tribe of Ephraim brought its offering first, as is said *On the seventh day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Ephraim* (Num. 7:48); *On the eighth day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Manasseh* (Num. 7:54).

2. Another comment: *On the eighth day*, etc. And so you find that Ephraim brought his offering first because Jacob [decreed] him to be the first-born son and the older; and the next day it was Manasseh's turn. With regard to the effect of Jacob's decree, R. Tanhuma bar Abba began his discourse as follows: *The words of the wise are as goads* (Eccles. 12:11). Why *as goads*? Because as a goad directs the heifer to plow in the furrow it is meant to plow, so the words of the wise direct a man in the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He. How beautifully, then, did Solomon put it when he said, *The words of the wise are as goads!*

As for the word *goad*, the Mishnah calls a goad *mardé'a*,⁶ while the Bible calls it either *darḥan* or *malmaḍ*, as is written *With an ox-goad (malmaḍ)* (Judg. 3:31); and *To set the goads (darḥan)* (1 Sam. 13:21). Why, R. Nathan asked, is the goad called *mardé'a*? Because it imparts sense (*moreh de'ah*) to the heifer. And why is a goad called *darḥan*? Because it lodges understanding (*maḍir binah*) in the heifer. *Malmaḍ*? Because it trains (*mēlammeḍ*) the heifer to plow in the furrow it is supposed to plow. Even so the words of the wise lodge understanding in men, impart sense to them, and teach them the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He. So you see, *The words of the wise are as goads.*

Another derivation: Why are the words of the wise described as *darḥanoṭ*? R. Berechiah answered: Like a shuttlecock flying back and forth (*dur banoṭ*),⁷ or like a ball that children play

6. See Oh 16:1.

7. So, at the suggestion of Professor Efraim E. Urbach, I translate the phrase *dur šel bērarah* which Parma MS has instead of *dur banoṭ*. *Bērarah*, a sievelike thing, is taken to mean a "racket," the racket with which a shuttlecock is

catch with ⁸—one tosses it here and another tosses it there—so words fly back and forth when the wise come into a house of study and discuss Torah, one stating his view, and another stating his view, still another stating his view, and another stating a different view. Yet the words of these and of the other Sages, all of them, were given by Moses the shepherd from what he received from the Unique One of the universe: *They are given from one shepherd* (Eccles. 12:11). Now since one states one view, and one states another view, do their words merely fly about aimlessly in the air? Indeed not! Scripture goes on to describe the words of the wise *As nails planted by masters of assemblies* (*ibid.*). Note that the text does not say “as nails set,” but *planted*. Why? In describing the words of the wise as nails, Scripture is pointing up the fact that since a nail has a head it is easy to pull out. Hence the phrase *as nails planted* implies the following: The roots of a tree deep-planted are hard to pull out, yet they do not have strength like the strength of iron; a nail of iron, on the other hand, though it has strength, [can be easily pulled out]. Therefore both the strength of iron and the tenacity of a tree’s deep-planted roots are given to words of Torah.

Another comment: As the roots of a tree spread in all directions, so words of Torah enter and spread through the whole body of a man.

As nails planted by masters of assemblies. Just when are words of Torah said to be planted like nails in men? When? When a master of Torah enters a house of study where men are assembled to hear him.

Another comment: Since a goad may be taken up and set aside at will, one might think that the same can be done with words of Torah; therefore the verse goes on to say *as nails planted* [—immovable].

struck. *Bērah* may also be a bold pun on *banot*—both words being understood as “little girls” (*bērah* as the feminine of *bar*, “son”). PE have *dur banot*, which would mean “like the ball with which girls play,” or “like the shuttlecock flying back and forth.”

8. Read, as in Parma MS, not *bm*, “with them” (masculine), but *bh*, “with it” or “it.”

As for the words *the masters taken away*⁹ (Eccles. 12:11) which follow upon *as nails planted*, they imply the answer to the question, When may words of Torah be spoken of as fixed in a man? And when is that? Only after men's Masters have been taken away from them by death. As long as his teacher is alive, a man puts off study, [saying] "Whenever there is need of him, my teacher is available to me, and I will ask him." But once his teacher is dead, behold, a man must act on his own: he must labor day and night to fix in his own mind what he has learned by himself, knowing full well that he now has no one to ask. Hence we answer the question "When may words of Torah be spoken of as fixed in a man?" by saying, "Only after men's Masters have been taken away from them."

In the verse *They are given from one Shepherd* (*ibid.*), *they* stands for both these and those, these [being the Sages mentioned in Torah], those being the Scribes [not mentioned in Torah] whose words must also be considered as given from the Unique One of the universe.¹⁰ *And even more than these, my son, take heed* (Eccles. 12:12). What is implied by *even more than these*? That you are to be even more heedful of the words of the Scribes than of the words of Torah. Why [then were the words of the Scribes not set down?]¹¹ Because if an attempt had been made to set down their words in writing there would have been no end of books: *Of making many books there would be no end* (*ibid.*).¹¹

As R. Abba of Serungin¹² taught: Were a man to think of writing as many books as would contain the words of the Scribes, then, as Scripture says, *Because of so many more*, MEHEMMAH, *my son*¹³ (Eccles. 12:12). What is meant by MEHEMMAH, *my*

9. In this comment the stem *'sf*, meaning "assemble," is understood in its other sense, "taken away by death."

10. See above in this Section.

11. Written Law, set down in clear writ, enforces itself, and needs no human assistance, whereas Oral Law, having no canonical support, must rely upon public consensus for authority.

12. A place near Tiberias.

13. Translated above as *And even more than these, my son*. A vowelless text readily permits R. Abba's reading of *mehemmah*.

son? It means that confusion (*mehummah*) would overcome you.

Furthermore, said R. Berechiah the Priest, we have been reading the word *masmēroṭ* (Eccles. 12:11), translated above as "nails," as though it were spelled with a *samek*.¹⁴ In truth, it is here spelled *maśmēroṭ* [with a *sin*] and hence suggests the word *mišmaroṭ*, "watches": even as the watches (*mišmaroṭ*) of the priesthood are twenty-four, so the books of Torah are no more than twenty-four, and whoever reads [reverently] a book other than the twenty-four is considered as one who reads [reverently] in heretical books, of which the Torah has said: *And of more than these, my son, beware.*

Therefore, R. [Tanḥuma bar Abba concluded]: Be heedful of the words of the Scribes even more than of the words of Torah: Why? Because the words of the Scribes, [like the words of Torah given from the Unique One of the universe], are like goads¹⁵ [directing men in the ways of the Holy One, blessed be He].

On the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, R. Johanan used to say the benediction: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast hallowed us by Thy precepts, and hast prescribed for us the taking of the lulab";¹⁶ but on other days of the Feast he used to conclude the same benediction with the words "and hast prescribed for us the ruling of the elders." R. Joshua ben Levi, however, concluded the benediction every day of the Feast of Tabernacles with the words "and hast prescribed for us the taking of the lulab." But did not R. Joshua ben Levi admit to R. Johanan that the taking of the lulab was a precept ordained by Scripture only for the first day of the Feast, it being said, *And ye shall take you on the first day . . . branches of palm-trees* (Lev. 23:40), and that on all the remaining days the taking of the lulab was no more than a ruling of the elders? [R. Joshua ben Levi, however, though in agree-

14. As it is spelled in all its other occurrences in Scripture.

15. See above in this Section.

16. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 755.

ment with R. Johanan on the meaning of the verse in Leviticus]—so taught R. Samuel¹⁷ ben Ḥalafta citing R. Aḥai—[justified his practice as follows:] Scripture says, *The words of the wise are as goads, etc., they are given from one shepherd* (Eccles. 12:11), and therefore it is clear that [while God's precepts to Israel are given] through words uttered in Torah, they are also given through words uttered by elders and Sages.

3. Another comment: *The words of the wise*. R. Ḥiyya bar Abba went into a synagogue, and upon hearing read *And Abraham journeyed from thence* (Gen. 20:1), said: Well did the Sages teach: "Beware of the Sages' glowing coals, lest you be burnt, for their bite is the bite of the fox, and their sting is the scorpion's sting, and their hiss is the serpent's hiss" (Ab 2:15). And why did he quote this passage? Because the preceding verse is *Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father* (Gen. 19:36).¹⁸

You find that when Abraham came to the Land, Lot came with him. And because he attached himself to Abraham, he grew rich, as Abraham had grown rich, for it is said *And Abram went up out of Egypt, he, and his wife, and all that he had, and Lot with him, into the South. And Abram was very rich, etc. . . . And Lot also* (Gen. 13:1, 2, 5). Mark, they had become so rich that the Land could not bear the two of them at the same time: *And the Land was not able to bear them, etc.* (Gen. 13:6). And do you marvel at this thing, that the Land was not able to bear them? It was unable not only¹⁹ because their substance was so great, but also because of the arguments which took

17. So, apparently, Parma MS. PE: "R. Simeon ben Ḥalafta," an unacceptable reading. R. Simcon ben Ḥalafta was a Tanna of the early part of the third century C.E., and so could not very well be interpreting assertions made by Amoraim in the middle of the century.

18. Lot's descendants born of the incestuous union referred to in Genesis were not allowed to intermarry with the descendants of Abraham. Thus Abraham's request addressed to Lot, *Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me* (Gen. 13:9), with its fateful consequences in the life of Lot, was as ominous as the touch of a glowing coal. See *Yēfeh to'ar* on Gen. Rabbah 52:4.

19. "only"—Parma MS.

place among the herdsmen, as it is written *and there was a strife between the herdsmen*, etc. (Gen. 13:7). But why were they arguing back and forth? Because when a man is righteous, the members of his household also are righteous like him, and so, too, is anyone who joins with him; and when a man is wicked, the members of his household also are wicked like him. Now Abraham's herdsmen used to lead out Abraham's cattle muzzled in order that they should not deprive other people's herds of their herbage; but Lot's herdsmen did not muzzle Lot's cattle. Thereupon the herdsmen of Abraham fell to arguing with the herdsmen of Lot, saying to them: Why are you causing Lot to have a bad name by leading out his cattle unmuzzled? The herdsmen of Lot replied: It is we who ought to protest against you because you muzzle the cattle. Since you know that Abraham's cattle will finally go back to Lot—because Abraham has no children—you do not feed them properly! Because you know that Abraham has no son, and that eventually, when he dies, Lot will be his heir, you make yourselves out to be righteous at the expense of another man's cattle. You go too far.²⁰ How do you presume to say that what our cattle eat they eat wrongfully? ²¹ Are they not eating what is rightfully theirs? Did not the Holy One, blessed be He, say thus to Abraham: *Unto thy seed will I give this Land* (Gen. 12:7)? Behold, eventually he will die without children. And Lot who is his brother's son will be his heir.

And who whispered into your ear that the herdsmen had arguments concerning such matters? R. Judah bar Simon said: Read the end of the verse, *But the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the Land* (Gen. 13:7). Why is this [apparently irrelevant] statement made? Precisely because the herdsmen were arguing about the use of the Land, (as is said *And there*

20. [*Bē-yoter*, translated above "you go too far," would seem to belong rather with "righteous" in the preceding line: "you make yourselves out to be mighty righteous at the expense of another man's cattle. How do you presume," etc. L. N.]

21. So Parma MS; PE: "[You argue that] what Lot's cattle eat they take wrongfully."

was a strife between the herdsmen, etc.), the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Lot's herdsmen *But the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelt then in the Land*. By this He was implying the following: True, I told Abraham that I would give the Land to his children—to *his* children—not to this wicked Lot, as you think. But even though I told Abraham that I would give the Land to his children, when did I intend to do so? Only after I had driven the Canaanite and the Perizzite out of the Land. As yet, however, I have given no children to Abraham, and the Canaanite and the Perizzite are still in the Land. The Land still has them as masters over it, and yet you make such wild claims to its ownership!

R. Azariah said: Even as there was strife among the herdsmen, so there was strife between Abraham and Lot. And the proof? The plea, *Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee*, etc. (Gen. 13:8).

Is not the whole Land before thee? Separate thyself, I pray thee, from me (Gen. 13:9). The ordinary word *hibbadeh* for *separate thyself* is not written here. Instead the word *hippared* is written, which, according to R. Helbo, suggests that Abraham said to Lot: As the mule (*pirdah*)²² does not accept semen and so does not form an embryo, so shall my seed not mix with your seed.²³

The verse immediately following says: *Lot lifted up his eyes* (Gen. 13:10), meaning that he cast his eyes upon wantonness,²⁴ in the sense in which it is said "His master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph" (Gen. 39:7). And the verse goes on to say of Lot that he *beheld all the round plain of the Jordan* (Gen. 13:10), its roundness conveying a suggestion to him "of a

22. *Pirdah* is taken by the commentator to be a nominal form of *prg*, "to separate." The Hebrew word for mule thus denotes "a creature set apart."

23. See Deut. 23:4, and above, n. 18.

24. Since physically it is impossible to lift up one's eyes and see all of the Land, the Rabbis assumed that here "lifting one's eyes" has another meaning, namely a longing for wanton living. So Mah on Gen. Rabbah 41:7.

Lwt (Lot) may be derived from *lhw*, "one who has a passion [for wantonness]." See also B.Hor 10a, Naz 23b, and Gen. Rabbah 57:9.

whorish woman, of rounded buttocks"²⁵ (Prov. 6:26). The verse says further, *where every woman deserved the waters*²⁶ (Gen. 13:10), implying that all the women of the plain were whoring women, and should, like women suspected of adultery, have been put to the ordeal of drinking the bitter waters of the curse.²⁷ So taught R. Simeon ben Yoḥai.

R. Eleazar ben Pēdaṭ said in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra: See to what extent wicked Lot deprived righteous Abraham of the Divine Word. As long as Lot was attached to Abraham, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not speak to Abraham. Only after Lot separated from Him, did the Divine Word leap out to Abraham, as is said *And the Lord spoke unto Abram, after that Lot was separated from him* (Gen. 13:14).

Therefore, when the angels were destroying Sodom, but through Abraham's merit were saving Lot, what did they say to Lot? *Escape to the mountain, lest thou be swept away* (Gen. 19:17), by which they meant "Because of that great mountain, Abraham, thou art being given the opportunity to escape. Go thou to him!" He replied: "I cannot. Long ago, Abraham said to me: 'Separate thyself,' and so *I cannot escape unto the mountain*," etc. (Gen. 19:19).

A comment on the verse's conclusion: *Lest the evil cling to me* (*ibid.*). Lot said: "All the days that I was in Sodom the Holy One, blessed be He, would compare my deeds with the deeds of its inhabitants, and I survived [the judgment] because in comparison with them I was righteous. But if I were now to go to righteous Abraham, God would weigh my deeds comparing them with his deeds. And therefore *I cannot [escape to the mountain]*." Why not? "*Lest the [judgment that I am] evil cling to me [and result in my destruction]*."

Two people said much the same thing, taught R. Johanan—[Lot, and] the woman of Zarephath [in the territory of Zidon

25. The word "bread" is a euphemism for a woman or "buttocks." See Gen. 39:6 and Rashi. JV: *For on account of a whorish woman a man is brought to a round of bread.*

26. So apparently understood. JV: *That it was well watered everywhere.*

27. See Num. 5:11 ff.

who said to Elijah:] *Art thou indeed*²⁸ *come unto me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son?* (1 Kings 17:18). She meant: Until you came to me, the Holy One, blessed be He, used to weigh my deeds, comparing them with [the deeds] of the inhabitants of my town, and so I survived [in the judgment], because compared with them I was worthy. But then you came to me. And because you are a righteous man, the Holy One, blessed be He, weighed my deeds, comparing them with your deeds, and so you brought my sins to remembrance, and my son died.

All that is said above is needful for understanding of *The words of the wise are as goads*.²⁹

4. [The theme *The words of the wise are as goads* runs through the story of] Jacob also.³⁰

When Jacob's time to die had come and Joseph heard that he was ill, he began to think in his heart of certain things. R. Eliezer said that Joseph thought in his heart of three things; but R. Samuel bar Nahman said that he thought of five, as follows:³¹ "My sons having been born in Egypt,³² is it conceivable that my father will bless them? is it conceivable that my father will declare them Tribes?³³ that he will declare me the first-born? that he will thrust Reuben from the position of the first-born? And why was Rachel not brought to the burial cave³⁴ at Hebron? With these thoughts in mind Joseph went to Jacob, taking

28. So PE; *indeed* is not in MT or in Parma MS.

29. They may be sharp and hurtful. Abraham's "separate thyself" results in an irreparable act, for God fulfills the words of the wise.

30. Jacob, the homily will show, had divine authority to declare Manasseh and Ephraim fathers of their respective Tribes. But Jacob on his own decided to give Ephraim precedence. And since *The words of the wise are as goads*. Ephraim came to be the senior Tribe—an oblique way of teaching that Hanukkah, though instituted by the Sages, should receive the kind of deference given to festivals whose observance is commanded in Scripture.

31. As the account develops, only three of Joseph's five musings will be dealt with.

32. An unhallowed land.

33. To share alike with the other Tribes in taking possession of the Land of Israel.

34. Machpelah. See Gen. 35:19 and 23:19-20.

his two sons with him: *And it came to pass after these things . . . And he took with him his two sons Manasseh and Ephraim* (Gen. 48:1),³⁵ even as a priest on his way to the threshing floor [to get the heave offering due him] will take his two sons with him to demonstrate to all that they, being his sons, have the same right which he has in the yield of the harvest.

One said to Joseph: "Behold, thy father is sick" (*ibid.*). Who is the *one* who told Joseph that his father was sick? The holy spirit, some say, through whom he saw his father's sickness. And some say, Bilhah told him, for she attended Jacob—as soon as he took sick, she went and told Joseph. And some say, Benjamin made it known to him. And some say, Joseph placed agents in Jacob's residence—as soon as they sensed that Jacob was sick, they came and made it known to Joseph.

Is this the sum of Joseph's excellence, that he carried to excess the honor due his father and refrained from visiting him at all hours, so that if others had not come and told him that his father was sick he would not have known? Not at all! Scripture would have you know the full extent of Joseph's righteousness: He did not wish to remain alone with his father, lest his father say to him, "How could your brothers have done such a thing³⁶ to you?" and then proceed to curse them. Joseph said: I know my father's righteousness is such that all his words have the force of decrees. Because he said to Laban *With whomsoever thou findest thy gods, he shall not live* (Gen. 31:32), my mother died.³⁷ And so if I chanced to say something which would give him cause to curse my brothers, he would curse them, with the result that I would have destroyed the whole world, which was created only for the sake of the Tribes.³⁸

35. *And it came to pass . . . and Ephraim*—Parma MS.

36. That is, "have sold you into slavery," Gen. 37:28.

37. See Gen. 31:19, 32.

38. See Piska 4.1. The view common in Rabbinic and pseudepigraphic literature that the world was created for the sake of Israel—in this instance, for the sake of the Tribes—does not owe its origin to national pride, but is closely connected with the ethical conception of creation. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 67–68; and MTeh 2:14, 16; 11:2; 25:9; 109:4.

Because of such considerations Joseph refrained from going to see his father at all hours.³⁹

"Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee" (Gen. 48:2). At once, *Israel strengthened himself, and sat up in the bed* (*ibid.*). Why did he make the effort? According to R. Joshua ben Levi, by sitting up erect he showed his respect for Joseph, for he said: The Holy One, blessed be He, has made my son ruler of the world, and I, shall I not show him honor? Therefore *Israel strengthened himself*.

Another explanation: Why did he make the effort? In order that the Tribes should see how he regarded Joseph—sitting up erect before him even when ill—so that they also would show Joseph honor.

Another explanation: Why did he pull himself together and sit up erect? R. Aḥa said: In order not to bless them while lying down. For then it would be said that Jacob's blessings were gifts of a man about to die, who knew not what he was doing. Therefore he pulled himself together and sat up erect, to let it be known that his gifts were the gifts of a well man.

Another explanation: *And he strengthened himself*. R. Phinehas ben Hama said in the name of R. Aḥa: Jacob strengthened himself by means of prayer, saying: When I come to bless them, may the holy spirit rest upon me so that I bless them properly.

When Jacob saw that Joseph's sons were with him, he said: For seventeen years have you been inquiring after my well-being, and they have not come with you.⁴⁰ But now they are come with you. I know what is in your heart. If I bless them, I will seemingly make a mockery⁴¹ of the command of the Holy One, blessed be He, who said to me: Out of thee I shall raise up Twelve Tribes [and no more]. If I do not bless them, it will offend you. As it happens, I am going to bless them. But do not think that it is on account of you, because you fed me, that I am going to bless them. The truth is that long ago, at the time I

39. See Bērešit Rabbati, p. 225.

40. "with you"—Parma MS.

41. "seemingly make a mockery"—Parma MS.

was in Beth-el, God told me to bless them. I was so told when *God Almighty appeared unto me at Luz . . . He said unto me: Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company composed of [two more] peoples*⁴² (Gen. 48:3-4). Here in a way Jacob told Joseph a lie, for he did not quote God as having said to him: "I will make of thee a nation and a company composed of nations!" This, in fact, is the statement we find that God made when He appeared to Jacob at Beth-el on his way from Paddan-aram and blessed him with the promise of a "nation and a company composed of nations" as well. And the specific verses? *God appeared unto Jacob again, when he came from Paddan-aram, and blessed him . . . and God said unto him: I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company composed of nations shall be of thee* (Gen. 35:9, 11). And so one would have expected Jacob to repeat these words and quote God as saying, "Behold, I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a nation and a company composed of nations." Why then did Jacob say nothing of a nation to Joseph, but instead mention only *a company composed of peoples*?⁴³ Because he said to himself: [At Beth-el], when the Holy One, blessed be He, made this statement to me, I already had eleven sons who were to be the fathers of Tribes. And when Benjamin was born, I said [at first: This birth is the fulfillment of God's

42. The implication that "[two more] peoples" were intended may be drawn from Scripture's use of two verbs, "I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee"; and possibly also from the Rabbinic rule that a plural without further specification indicates at least two of a kind.

The commentator's reason for so interpreting *a company composed of [two more] peoples* is that immediately Jacob goes on to say to Joseph—as though his statement followed logically—*And therefore thy two sons . . . are mine*.

43. For the passage beginning "and blessed him with the promise of 'a nation' . . ." to "only *a company composed of peoples*" I follow Parma MS. FT, translated, would read: ". . . at that time *God said unto him: I am God Almighty. Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company composed of nations shall be of thee* (Gen. 35:11). And so Jacob should have repeated these words to Joseph: 'Behold, I will make thee fruitful and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a nation and a company of nations.' Why then did Jacob speak to Joseph only of a company composed of peoples, and of nothing else?"

promise of a nation and a company composed of nations. But then I realized] that in promising *a company composed of nations*,⁴⁴ [God meant that I was to lay claim to children other than Benjamin]. Hence Jacob said to Joseph: *Thy two sons who were born unto thee in the land of Egypt before I came unto thee in Egypt, are mine* (Gen. 48:5)—not yours, I say, but mine: for God spoke to me at Beth-el of *a nation and a company composed of nations*, and yet after that gave me only Benjamin [—a nation]. Accordingly, they are not yours, but mine. Behold, even as Reuben and Simeon are Tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh shall be Tribes. Only those whom you beget after them, shall be called yours, as is said *And thy issue that thou begetteth after them, shall be thine* (Gen. 48:6), but these two shall be known by my name.

Joseph thus received good news concerning two things he had been thinking of in his heart. For Jacob blessed his two sons, [though they were born in Egypt], saying *The angel who hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads* (Gen. 48:16); and he⁴⁵ also declared them Tribes: *Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine* (Gen. 48:5). Although it grieved Joseph, Jacob put Ephraim before Manasseh.

As for that which Jacob said, *God . . . appeared to me at Luz* (Gen. 48:3), by Luz he meant Beth-el, as is written *So Jacob came to Luz . . . the same is Beth-el* (Gen. 35:6).

R. Berechiah the Priest Berabbi⁴⁶ said in the name of R. Levi, who had it in the name of R. Samuel ben Nahman: In order to justify his declaring Ephraim and Manasseh Tribes Jacob explained: The Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to me and said: *I am God Almighty, etc., and kings shall come*

44. A prophecy not fulfilled by the birth of one child.

45. From "two things he had been thinking of" to "*bless the lads* (Gen. 48:16); and he" I follow Parma MS. PE: "two things, namely, that the Divine Word had blessed his two sons: *The angel who hath redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads* (Gen. 48:16); and also that He made them Tribes."

46. "Berabbi"—Parma MS. P has "in the name of R. Berechiah," probably a misreading of the letters *beṭ* and *reṭ* which stand for "Berabbi."

out of thy loins (Gen. 35:11); and then Jacob interpreted these words as follows: Had He said to me, "and kings shall come out of thee," I would have taken it that He was referring to the fathers of the Tribes⁴⁷ [as ancestors of future kings]. But since his actual words were *out of thy loins*, He must have been speaking of my son's⁴⁸ sons, of Ephraim and Manasseh.⁴⁹

R. Judah the Levite the son of R. Shallum said: If you cannot accept the earlier verse in Genesis as proof that Ephraim and Manasseh are referred to in the phrase *a company composed of nations*, then you may surely accept as proof Jacob's own understanding of the phrase in which he tells Joseph that at Beth-el *God said to me: Behold, I will make thee fruitful, and multiply thee, and I will make of thee a company composed of [two more] peoples* (Gen. 48:4). [As a matter of fact, the reference to *kings out of thy loins* does not necessarily prove that kings out of Ephraim and Manasseh are meant, for] an alternative interpretation of *A nation and a company composed of nations* (Gen. 35:11) runs as follows: *Nations* refers to Benjamin, and *a company composed of [two more] nations* refers to Ephraim and Manasseh. *And kings shall come out of thy loins* refers [not to kings out of the loins of Ephraim and Manasseh] but to king Saul,⁵⁰ who rose up out of Benjamin, the first of the kings of Israel, of whose ancestry it is said "Now there was a man of Benjamin, whose name was Kish, the son of Abiel" (1 Sam. 9:1).

Directly after Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh and declared that they would father Tribes, Joseph proceeded to talk about the matter of Rachel. He asked Jacob: "Why was she not brought for burial <[to the cave at Hebron] in which you are to be buried?"> (Joseph had grieved greatly about this matter).

Hereupon his father proceeded to reply concerning Rachel not by saying "I, when I came from Paddan," but, as Scripture tells,

47. Who sprang directly from Jacob.

48. I emend "my sons'" to "my son's."

49. Jeroboam out of the Tribe of Ephraim (1 Kings 11:26), and Jehu out of the Tribe of Manasseh (2 Kings 9:14). See Gen. Rabbah 82:6.

50. Saul, and Ish-bosheth his son. See 2 Sam. 2:12, and Gen. Rabbah 82:4.

by saying *I also, when I came from Paddan* (Gen. 48:7). What did he mean by *I also*? He meant: "Upon your life, as you wished that your mother be brought to the grave [at Hebron], I also wished it."

Rachel died unto me (Gen. 48:7). What did he mean by *unto me*? That the care of her was a charge *unto me*. Or *unto me* implies: I am the one who misses her, for I had no delight other than [through] her: *died unto me*—I am the one who misses her.

Joseph asked Jacob: Was there perhaps a reason that you did not bring her to the grave [at Hebron]? Was it perhaps because of the rainy season?

Jacob replied: No. *In coming to Ephrath the earth still looked like a sieve*⁵¹ (*ibid.*). The time was between Passover and the Feast of Weeks, when, like a sieve, the earth seemed to move to and fro with the swaying of the ears of grain from which bread is made.⁵²

Joseph said: Give the word now, and I will take her up and bury her.

Jacob replied: You may not, my son. Except for a divine command I would not have buried her there. I too wished to bring her up and bury her [in Hebron]; but the Holy One, blessed be He, did not allow me to, *And I buried her there* (*ibid.*). What did Jacob imply by the word *there*?⁵³ Obedience to a divine command. God commanded Rachel to be buried there because it was known to Him and foreseen that a time was to come when the Temple would be destroyed and Jacob's children would depart into exile. Whereupon they would go to the Patriarchs whom they would beseech to pray for them, but the Patriarchs would not avail the children of Israel. Then, before setting forth on their way, they would go

51. JV: *And there was still some way to come to Ephrath*. But the word *kḥrh* may mean either "a measure of distance" or "a sieve."

52. "When, like a sieve, the earth seemed to move to and fro with the swaying of the ears of corn from which bread is made." So Parma MS. The phrase *šybulym hlwt*, "ears of corn from which bread is made," apparently misread by a copyist, appears in P as *šykwlym hlw[k]*, "when it was possible to journey."

53. The text might have read, *And I buried her in the way of Ephrath*.

and embrace the tomb of Rachel, who would arise and beg mercy of the Holy One, blessed be He, saying to Him: Master of the universe, hearken to the voice of my weeping and have mercy upon my children, or else pay the due bill which I present.⁵⁴ Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He, would listen to the voice of her prayer. And the proof? Scripture says [of the time when the Temple was destroyed], *A voice is heard in Ramah*,⁵⁵ *lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children* (Jer. 31:15). Scripture goes on to say, *And there is hope for thy future, saith the Lord; and thy children shall return to their border* (Jer. 31:17). Jacob thus satisfied Joseph as to why his mother was not brought to a grave [at Hebron].

After Jacob declared that Joseph's sons would father Tribes, Joseph proceeded to bring his sons near to his father that he might bless them, as is said *And Joseph took them both, Ephraim in his right hand [toward Israel's left hand]* (Gen. 48:13). And why did Joseph do so? Because when he realized that Jacob mentioned Ephraim first, *Ephraim and Manasseh, even as Reuben and Simeon, shall be mine* (Gen. 48:5), he grew afraid lest Manasseh be thrust from the position of the first-born. He therefore brought them near his father, placing Manasseh at his father's right and Ephraim at his father's left.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Must I not now make known to Jacob the person who is to rise up [in the land occupied] by this pair—namely, Jeroboam the son of Nebat of the Tribe of Ephraim? ⁵⁶ For, as R. Hama taught: "The Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that Jeroboam the son of Nebat would rise up out of Ephraim and make two calves of gold. How else [is the question, which Jacob asked Joseph], *Who are these?*" ⁵⁷ (Gen. 48:8) to be construed, save [that through the holy spirit

54. I.e., transfer my bones to Machpelah in Hebron.

55. Ramah, near which Jacob buried Rachel, lay north of Jerusalem in the path of the exiles driven toward Babylon. Hebron was situated south of Jerusalem, and the Patriarchs buried there were out of reach of the exiles going north to Babylon.

56. With Friedmann, I delete the words "and Manasseh, who set up an idol in the Temple."

57. Surely Jacob must have known his own grandchildren!

Jacob was enabled to see the calves made by Jeroboam, something which is intimated by Jacob's use of the word *these*: For even as in the wilderness the calves of gold⁵⁸ were greeted with the cry], *These be thy gods, O Israel!* (Exod. 32:4), [so again in the days of Jeroboam, when] *The king took counsel, and made two calves of gold . . . he said . . . These be thy gods, O Israel!* (1 Kings 12:28). However, the Holy One, blessed be He, then withdrew the holy spirit from Jacob, [so that he could neither see the future nor bless Ephraim and Manasseh]. (*Now the eyes of Israel were heavy for age* [Gen. 48:10]. According to R. Judah, these words are to be understood in the usual sense, namely, that because of his old age, his eyelids were heavy and they clung to the lower lids, so that when he wanted to see he had to have them lifted.⁵⁹ R. Naḥman said to R. Judah: God's mercy, no!⁶⁰ What is meant by *so that he could not see* [*ibid.* 48:10] is that the holy spirit had withdrawn from him).

[But before the holy spirit was withdrawn from him], Jacob had proceeded to ask Joseph: *Who are these?* Behold, Ephraim and Manasseh lived with him for seventeen years, yet he asked Joseph: *Who are these?* Why should he have asked such a question? Because Jacob foresaw Jeroboam's two calves where-with he would lead Israel astray, saying: *These be thy Gods, O Israel!* (1 Kings 12:28). Another comment: In asking the question, what did Jacob foresee when he used the word *mi*, "who?" Jacob foresaw that fifty myriads of his sons were to fall in battle, for in the word *mi* the letter *mem* stands for forty and the letter *yoq* stands for ten; thus the two letters intimate fifty myriads. The reference here is to the five hundred thousand [who would be slain] when Israel went to war, Israelite against Israelite.⁶¹

58. According to R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, they made 13 calves, one for each Tribe, and one held in common by all the Tribes. See MTeh 3:3.

59. Else, how could Jacob go on to say: *God hath let me see thy seed also* (Gen. 48:11)?

60. Scripture would refrain from speaking of the physical failings of the Fathers. See Gen. Rabbah 70:16.

61. The war between Jeroboam, descendant of Ephraim, and Abijah, descendant of Judah. See 2 Chron. 13:17. The verse in Genesis would read: *Who*

Hereupon Joseph began to reply pleadingly: Father, they are my sons. Like me, they are righteous: *They are my sons. They are the ones whom God hath given me by this one*⁶² (Gen. 48:9). What is meant by the phrase *by this one*? That he brought their mother Asenath⁶³ into the presence of his father and said to him: Father, I beseech you, even if only for the sake of this righteous one.

Thereupon, Jacob said: *Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them (ibid.)*. When Joseph brought them to him, he began to embrace them, kiss them, and rejoice in them, saying: "Perhaps in my joy the holy spirit will come to rest upon me, and I shall be able to bless them." But the holy spirit did not return to him, and when Joseph saw his father's distress, he took his sons and went outside, fell on his face, made them also prostrate themselves, and besought mercy. Thereupon—said Rabbi—the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the holy spirit: "Must Joseph long remain in grief? Foot it speedily,⁶⁴ and enter into Jacob that he may bless them,"⁶⁵ for the Holy One, blessed be He, cannot bear to see one of this Tribe⁶⁶ fallen on his face. So, too, when Joshua the son of Joseph's son fell on his face, forthwith the Divine Word leaped out to him, saying, *Get thee up; wherefore now art thou fallen upon thy face?* (Josh. 7:10). And so, [because Joseph, Ephraim's father, had fallen on his face], the prophet, [speaking for God], says, *And I, TIRGALTI,*⁶⁷ *for Ephraim's sake, in order to [make it pos-*

are these [50 myriads of Israel slain in warfare]? According to these two comments, the vision of idolatry and of murder—two of the three cardinal sins—for which descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh were to be responsible, made it impossible for Jacob to bestow the blessing upon the two sons of Joseph.

62. Usually rendered, *here*.

63. Asenath, Joseph's Egyptian wife, was a convert of great piety. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 2, 172.

64. So Parma MS and P, and so emended by MC; FT: "appear."

65. Apparently, in returning to Jacob the holy spirit made it possible for him to bestow blessing but not to see the future.

66. So Parma MS; PE: "the [father (?) of a] Tribe."

67. Usually rendered "I taught to walk."

sible for Jacob to] take them into his⁶⁸ arms (Hos. 11:3). The unusual word *TIRGALTI* is to be construed as made up of two words, *tarti* and *riggalti*: "I, [the Lord], determined (*tarti*) the matter"; and "I forced the holy spirit to foot it (*riggalti*) back⁶⁹ [to Jacob], so that he could bless Ephraim. What then? Then Jacob was ready to take them into his arms⁷⁰ (*ibid.*) and could say to Joseph: "Bring them, I pray thee, unto me, and I will bless them" (Gen. 48:9). Because of whose merit? *Because of the cords of a man*,⁷¹ because of the merit of Joseph—said Jacob—I was able to draw them [into my arms] (Hos. 11:4). But they knew not that I healed them (Hos. 11:3), said God, [that it was I, the Lord, who through their forebear Ephraim caused blessing to be bestowed upon the children of Israel].

When Joseph put Ephraim at Jacob's left and Manasseh at his right, what did Jacob do? *Israel . . . laid . . . his left hand upon Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly (šikkēl)* (Gen. 48:14). How is *šikkēl* to be understood? Rabbi said: *Šikkēl* <means just what it says—[guided wittingly.]>⁷² R. Judah said: It means that God made the hands of Jacob deal violently (*Šikkēl*)⁷³ with the birthright of Manasseh. R. Nehemiah took *šikkēl* to mean that God instructed Jacob, that is, instructed the hands of Jacob, to act in accord with the will of the holy spirit, *šikkēl* here having the sense of *maškil* in the verse *A Psalm in which instruction was given (maškil) through the holy spirit to Ethan the Ezrahite*⁷⁴ (Ps. 89:1).

When Joseph saw what his father was doing, he was dis-

68. So W; JV: *And I taught Ephraim to walk, taking them by their arms.*

69. Could it mean that the holy spirit was bidden to "foot it back" as though on the feet of a dove? Cf. Matthew 3:16 and John 1:32.

70. So W; FT and P, "my arms"; JV: *taking them by their arms.*

71. *The cords of a man* which drew Jacob to Egypt are identified with Joseph. See Gen. Rabbah 86:1.

72. The words "means . . . guided wittingly]" are not in Parma MS. Avigdor Aptowitz suggests that "*škl*" be emended to "*šbl*"=Simeon ben Lakish," which would result in "According to R. Simeon ben Lakish," R. Judah and R. Nehemiah differed, as indicated below in this Section. See *Sinai*, 5 (5702/1942), 291.

73. Parma MS reads "*šikkēlu*," with the plural suffix, "they took away" or "they bereaved."

74. Ethan the Ezrahite is identified as Abraham. See Piskas 6.5 and 14.9.

tressed. Immediately he laid hold of his father's hand to remove it from Ephraim's head and to lay it upon Manasseh's head, as is said *When Joseph saw that his father was laying his right hand upon the head of Ephraim, it displeased him, and he held up his father's hand*⁷⁵ (Gen. 48:17). Jacob said to Joseph: "My hand—would you move it against my will?" (According to R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest,⁷⁶ the angel with whom Jacob wrestled,⁷⁷ by himself was as large as one third of the world).⁷⁸ "This hand here, this very one, grappled a captain of the host above, and you think to remove it against my will!" And Jacob went on to say to Joseph: "What say you, 'This one is the first-born?' I know it, my son, I know it. What do you think?"⁷⁹ Because I asked you many times, 'What did your brothers do to you?' and you would not tell me—did you think that I did not know? I knew it, my son, I knew it." *And he blessed them that day, saying: "By thee shall Israel bless, saying: God make thee as Ephraim and as Manasseh." And he set Ephraim before Manasseh* (Gen. 48:20).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Inasmuch as Jacob decreed that Ephraim be first, therefore also in the order of the offerings of the princes when they come to offer, Ephraim shall offer up before Manasseh: *On the seventh day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Ephraim* (Num. 7:48); and after that, *On the eighth day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Manasseh* (*ibid.* 7:54).

5. A further comment: *On the eighth day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Manasseh*. You find that in every matter Ephraim comes before Manasseh: in the matter of judges, and

75. "as is said *When Joseph saw . . . held up his father's hand*"—Parma MS.

76. "the Priest"—Parma MS.

77. See Gen. 32:25 ff.

78. Esau's angel, representing matter subject to constant change. See Maimonides, *Code*, I, i, ii, 3. See also B.Hul 91b and Gen. Rabbah 68:12.

79. In the passage "And Jacob went on to say to Joseph . . . what do you think?" I follow Parma MS; PE: "*And his father refused and said: I know it, my son, I know it* (Gen. 48:19). What say you, 'This is [the first-born]?' I know it, what do you think?"

of standards, and of kings, and of offerings. In the matter of judges: Joshua, who ruled out of the Tribe of Ephraim—*of the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua, the son of Nun*⁸⁰ (Num. 13:8); and afterwards Gideon, the son of Joash, of the Tribe of Manasseh. And of standards: *The standard of the camp of Ephraim* (Num. 2:18); and afterwards, *next unto him shall be the tribe of Manasseh*. And of kings: Jeroboam the son of Nebat—of Ephraim; and afterwards Jehu the son of Nimshi⁸¹—of the Tribe of Manasseh.

And why did Ephraim merit such precedence? Because he made little of himself. And the Holy One, blessed be He, loves everyone who humbles himself: *For though the Lord be high, yet regardeth He the humble* (Ps. 138:6). And who whispered into your ear that Ephraim used to humble himself? [No one.] Scripture says, *And Israel stretched out his right hand, and laid it upon Ephraim's head, and he was the little one*⁸² (Gen. 48:14), the latter words implying that Ephraim made little of himself. As for Manasseh, he used to go forth and engage with his father in affairs of state.⁸³

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Since he made little of himself, Ephraim will merit the honor of precedence.

Now if a younger man who used to make little of himself came to merit such honor, how much more and more will an older man who makes little of himself merit!

[Because Manasseh did not practice humility, he, by the word of Jacob, was put last among the princes, as is evident from the verse] *On the eighth day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Manasseh* (Num. 7:54).

80. "who ruled . . . *the son of Nun*"—Parma MS.

81. By transposing the first two letters, the name "Nimshi" (*Nmšy*) may be read *Mnšy*, "of the Tribe of Manasseh." See 2 Kings 9:2.

82. Since the words *and he was the little one* are taken by the commentator as superfluous, he interprets them not literally, but figuratively. See Gen. Rab. 6:4.

83. So Parma MS which reads: "he used to come and go, engaged as he was with his father in affairs of state." Friedmann, following MC, emends PE to "and engage with his father in his affairs of state." PE: "and engage with his father against giants."

PISKA 4

SUMMARY

Hanukkah—celebration of the
survival of the Twelve Tribes of
Israel, for whose sake everything
was created

Musaf is not recited on weekdays in Hanukkah, except when the New Moon or the Sabbath occurs during its celebration. When the *Musaf* is recited, Hanukkah is mentioned because it celebrates the survival of the Tribes of Israel. All such miracles as Hanukkah God performs for the sake of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, who are bearers of the seed of righteousness. Indeed, everything God created He created for the sake of the Tribes, as is shown by the fact that there are twelve months in the year, twelve signs of the Zodiac, twelve hours in a day, twelve hours in a night. And so, too, when Elijah set out to bring Israel under the wings of the Presence, he took twelve stones and built an altar with them (Sec. 1). Indeed, the redeemers of Israel, Moses and Elijah—both of the Tribe of Levi and alike in every other respect—knew that God created everything for the sake of the Twelve Tribes. And so when each of the two redeemers built an altar, he built it of twelve stones (Sec. 2).

When the Temple is restored, its restorers must remember that it exists not for the sake of their pleasure and glory, but for the sake of the Twelve Tribes. It must always serve them and be the means of propagating Torah, the word of God (Sec. 3).

And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the Tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the Lord came, saying: "Israel shall be thy name" (1 Kings 18:31).¹

1. David Luria surmises that 1 Kings 18 was at one time the haftarah for the Sabbath during Hanukkah. A line such as *and he repaired the altar that*

1. Let our master instruct us [in regard to the following]: Inasmuch as *Musaf* is not said on weekdays in Hanukkah, when a worshiper is saying either the *Musaf*² that falls [on the Sabbath in Hanukkah] or the *Musaf* for the New Moon [of Tevet] that falls in Hanukkah, is he required to say the words that mention Hanukkah?

In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim,³ as R. Simon cited it in the name of R. Joshua, our Masters taught as follows: Even though *Musaf* is not ordinarily said during Hanukkah except on the Sabbath,⁴ nevertheless, when the New Moon falls in Hanukkah, one is required to say the words that mention Hanukkah in the *Musaf* for the New Moon. So, too, on a Sabbath falling in Hanukkah, even though *Musaf* is not said during Hanukkah except on the Sabbath, nevertheless, one is required to say in the Sabbath *Musaf* the words that mention Hanukkah. And in what part of the *Musaf* is one to say the words that mention Hanukkah? In the Thanksgiving for God's mercies.⁵

You find that all the miracles which the Holy One, blessed be He, did for Israel and will do for them are for the sake of the Tribes.⁶ Even the Temple is to be rebuilt for the sake of the Tribes, as is said *Jerusalem that art to be rebuilt* (Ps. 122:3). And what follows in the text? *Because thither the Tribes are to go up* (Ps. 122:4).

So, too, everything that the Holy One, blessed be He, created, *was thrown down* (1 Kings 18:30) by Jeroboam and Ahab might well have suggested to the commentator a parallel to the altar thrown down by Antiochus.

However, Friedmann conjectures that 1 Kings 18 was at one time used as the haftarah for the New Moon of Tevet which fell on a Sabbath in the week of Hanukkah. That 1 Kings 18 was used on such an occasion he infers from the assertions which follow that in the *Musaf* for the New Moon of Tevet which falls in the week of Hanukkah, as well as in the *Musaf* for the Sabbath, the part about Hanukkah is to be mentioned in the '*Amidah*'. See Piska 8, n. 1.

2. The additional Tefillah. See Hertz, *APB*, pp. 776, 526.

3. "In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim"—Parma MS.

4. "except on the Sabbath"—Parma MS; PE: "except on the New Moon."

5. One of the latter benedictions in the '*Amidah*', the statutory prayer. See Hertz, *APB*, pp. 536, 150.

6. See Piska 3.4.

He created for the sake of the Tribes. Thus, you find that there are twelve months in the year, twelve signs of the Zodiac in the firmament, twelve hours in a day, twelve hours in a night.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Even the upper and lower worlds I created only for the sake of the Tribes, as is evident from the verse *For [the sake of] all these, hath My hand made* (Isa. 66:2); in this context the phrase *all these* intimates "For [the sake of] all these Twelve Tribes of Israel" (Gen. 49:28), with the number twelve, as already stated, represented also in the twelve signs of the Zodiac and in the twelve hours of the day. Therefore, when Elijah was about to bring Israel under the wings of the Presence, he took twelve stones according to the number of the Tribes and built an altar with them. And whence do we know this? From the lesson in the Prophets, namely, *And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the Tribes of the sons of Jacob*.

2. *And Elijah took*, etc. R. Tanḥuma Berabbi⁷ began his discourse as follows: *And by a prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt* (Hos. 12:14), that prophet being Moses; *and by a prophet was he preserved (ibid.)*—that is, by Elijah.

You find that two Prophets rose up for Israel out of the Tribe of Levi; one the first of all the Prophets, and the other the last of all the Prophets: Moses first and Elijah last,⁸ and both with a commission from God to redeem Israel:⁹ Moses,

7. "Berabbi"—Parma MS; P reads "*Byrwšlmy*," probably a misreading of the letters *bet* and *res* representing "Berabbi."

8. The Tribes of Gad and Benjamin compete with the Tribe of Levi for the honor of counting Elijah as theirs. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6, 316. In the comment above, Elijah is regarded as a Levite, according to the tradition which identifies Elijah with Phinehas the High Priest. And so, in the days of Moses, Elijah is considered in existence. See Rashi on B.BM 114b, and Seder 'Eliyahu Rabba, ed. Friedmann, p. 98, n. 57.

9. For the passage beginning "You find that two Prophets" and ending "both with a commission from God to redeem Israel" I follow Parma MS. PE: "You find that two Prophets out of the Tribe of Levi rose up for Israel, Moses first and Elijah last, both with a commission from God to redeem Israel."

with his commission, redeemed them from Egypt, as is said *Come now, therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh* (Exod. 3:10). And in the time-to-come, Elijah, with his commission, will redeem them, as is said *Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet* (Mal. 3:23). As with Moses, who in the beginning redeemed them out of Egypt, they did not return to slavery again in Egypt; so with Elijah, after he will have redeemed them out of the fourth exile,¹⁰ out of Edom, they will not return and again be enslaved—theirs will be an eternal deliverance.

You find that Moses and Elijah were alike in every respect: Moses was a prophet; Elijah was a prophet. Moses was called *man of God* (Deut. 33:1); and Elijah was called *man of God* (1 Kings 17:18). Moses went up to heaven: *And Moses went up unto God* (Exod. 19:3);¹¹ and Elijah went up to heaven, as is said *And it came to pass when Elijah would go up . . . into heaven* (2 Kings 2:1).¹² Moses slew the Egyptian; and Elijah slew Hiel, as is said *But when [Hiel] became guilty through Baal, he died* (Hos. 13:1).¹³ Moses was sustained by a woman, by the daughter of Jethro: *Call him, that he may eat bread* (Exod. 2:20); and Elijah was sustained by the woman of Zarephath in Zidon: *Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread* (1 Kings 17:11). Moses fled from the presence of Pharaoh; and Elijah fled from the presence of Jezebel. Moses fled and came to a well; and Elijah fled and came to a well, as is written *He arose, and went . . . and came to Beer-sheba* [the well of Sheba] (1 Kings 19:3). Moses: *And the cloud covered him six days* (Exod. 24:16); and Elijah went up in a whirlwind: *And it came to pass, when the Lord would take up Elijah by a whirlwind* (2 Kings 2:1). The power of Moses: *If*

10. "exile"—Parma MS.

11. This verse is in Parma MS.

12. MT: *When the Lord would take up Elijah . . . into heaven.*

13. See Yalkuṭ Kings, 214, and 1 Kings 16:34, where the story is told that Hiel, in conspiracy with the priests of Baal, hid in a cave below Mount Carmel, intending at the proper moment to cause smoke to rise up from the altar; but a serpent stung him and he died. See the Dura painting illustrating this incident, reproduced in Deut. Rabbah, ed. Lieberman, p. 132.

these men die the common death of all men, etc. (Num. 16:29); and the power of Elijah: *As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word* (1 Kings 17:1).¹⁴ Of Moses: *And the Lord passed by before him* (Exod. 34:6); and of Elijah: *And, behold, the Lord passed by* (1 Kings 19:11). Of Moses: *Then he heard the Voice* (Num. 7:89); and of Elijah: *And, behold, there came a Voice unto him*, etc. (1 Kings 19:13). Moses gathered Israel about Mount Sinai; and Elijah gathered them about Mount Carmel. Moses exterminated idolaters: *Put ye every man his sword upon his thigh*, etc. (Exod. 32:27); and Elijah exterminated idolatry, when he seized the prophets of Baal and slew them. Moses was zealous for the Lord: *Whoso is on the Lord's side, let him come unto me* (Exod. 32:26); and Elijah was zealous for the Lord: *Elijah said unto all the people: "Come near, I pray ye,"¹⁵ unto me* . . . *And he repaired the altar of the Lord that was thrown down* (1 Kings 18:30). Moses hid in a cave: *I will put thee in a cleft of the rock* (Exod. 33:22); and Elijah hid in a cave, spending a night there: *And he came¹⁶ unto a cave, and lodged there* (1 Kings 19:9). Of Moses: *He . . . came to the mountain of God* (Exod. 3:1); and of Elijah: *And came¹⁷ to . . . the mount of God* (1 Kings 19:8). Moses went to Horeb, and Elijah went to Horeb.¹⁸ Moses went into the wilderness: *He led the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness* (Exod. 3:1);¹⁹ and Elijah went into the wilderness: *But he himself went into the wilderness* (1 Kings 19:4). Moses—God spoke to him through an angel: *And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him* (Exod. 3:2); and Elijah—also through an angel: *And, behold, an angel* (1 Kings 19:5). Moses spent forty days and forty nights, during which he did not eat and did not drink; so, too, *Elijah went in*

14. Moses decreed that the earth cleave open, and Elijah that the rain halt.

15. *I pray ye*, not in MT.

16. MT adds: *thither*.

17. So Parma MS and PE; MT: *went*.

18. "Moses went . . . Elijah went to Horeb"—Parma MS.

19. This verse is in Parma MS.

the strength of that meal forty days (1 Kings 19:8). Moses made the orb of the sun stand still: *By means of this day*²⁰ *will I begin to put the dread of thee . . . upon the peoples that are under the heaven* (Deut. 2:25);²¹ and Elijah made the orb of the sun stand still: *By means of this day*²² *let it be known that Thou art God in Israel* (1 Kings 18:36). Moses prayed in behalf of Israel: *Destroy not Thy people and Thine inheritance* (Deut. 9:26); and Elijah prayed in behalf of Israel: *Hear me, O Lord, hear me . . . for Thou didst turn their heart backward* (1 Kings 18:37). Moses, when he prayed in behalf of Israel, seized upon the merit of the Fathers: *Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel* (Exod. 32:13); so, too, Elijah: *O Lord, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Israel* (1 Kings 18:36). Moses—through him Israel accepted love for God: *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7); and Elijah—through him they accepted love for God, saying: *The Lord, He is God* (1 Kings 18:39). Moses made the Tabernacle in an area in which two *sē'ah* of seed might be sown;²³ and Elijah made a trench about the altar in an area in which a two *sē'ah* measure of seed might be sown.²⁴

In only one way do we find Moses presented as greater than Elijah. For God said to Moses: *But as for thee, stand thou here by Me* (Deut. 5:28); whereas God said to Elijah: *What doest thou here, Elijah?* (1 Kings 19:9).

Moses brought down fire; and Elijah brought down fire. Moses—when he brought down fire, all Israel stood by and saw it, as is said *There came a fire from before the Lord . . . which, when all the people saw, they shouted* (Lev. 9:24); and Elijah, when he brought down fire, all Israel stood by and saw

20. So PE; MT: *This day*.

21. During his war against Sihon. See Rashi, and MTeh 19:8.

22. The day was made longer so that the day itself could see and make known what happened during its course. See MTeh 19:8.

23. The courtyard of the Tabernacle was 100 x 50 cubits—approximately 1200 square yards (see Exod. 27:18, and B. Er 23b)—an area in which two *sē'ah* of seed might be sown.

24. Elijah . . . made a trench about the altar, [the trench circumscribing an area] as great as would contain a two *sē'ah* measure of seed (1 Kings 18:32).

it:²⁵ *When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces* (1 Kings 18:39). Moses built an altar; and Elijah built an altar. Moses called the altar by the name of the Lord: *Moses . . . called the name of it*²⁶ *Adonai-nissi* (Exod. 17:15); and Elijah—the name of his altar was the Lord: *And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord*²⁷ (1 Kings 18:32). Moses, when he built the altar, built it with twelve stones, according to the number of the children of Israel;²⁸ and Elijah, when he built the altar, built it according to the number of the Tribes of Israel, as is said *And Elijah took twelve stones*, etc. (1 Kings 18:32).

3. *And Elijah took twelve stones*, etc. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool* (Isa. 66:1), this particular verse having been uttered at the end of Isaiah's life as a prophet. When did he utter it in prophecy? In the days of Manasseh. As soon as Manasseh brought the idol into the Temple, Isaiah began prophesying to Israel, saying to them: Wherefore do you exalt yourselves? Is it because of the House which ye built for Me?²⁹ The upper and the lower worlds cannot contain My glory. Do I require this House that ye built for me? *Where is the House that ye may build unto Me* (*ibid.*),³⁰ Behold, Nebuchadnezzar will come and destroy it, and will exile you. At once Manasseh was angered at Isaiah and said [to his followers]: Seize him. They ran after him to seize him. As he fled from them, the carob-tree opened up and took him in. Thereupon Manasseh brought carpenters—so said R. Hanina the son of R. Isaac³¹

25. "when he brought . . . stood by and saw it"—Parma MS.

26. The words *by the name*, which follow in PE, are deleted as in Parma MS.

27. *And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the Lord*—Parma MS and MT. But PE: *And he placed the stones in the name of the Lord*.

28. See Exod. 24:4, and Ibn Ezra.

29. [Literally "Wherefore do ye boast to Me of this House: which ye have built for Me?" L. N.]

30. Cf. Acts 7:49.

31. "R. Hanina the son of R. Isaac"—Parma MS. PE, incorrectly, "R. Isaac in the name of R. Hanina bar Papa who cited R. Isaac."

—and had the carob-tree sawn into, and the blood flowed forth. Of this it is said *Moreover Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from mouth to mouth* (2 Kings 21:16). Is such a thing possible? What is meant, however, is that he slew Isaiah with whom God had spoken mouth to mouth, as He did to Moses, of whom it is written *With him do I speak mouth to mouth* (Num. 12:8).

Isaiah proceeded to admonish the children of Israel: *The heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool*. As for this House which will be rebuilt, do not think that it will be rebuilt for your sake, but for the sake of others. For what others? R. Judah the Levite son of R. Shallum said: For the sake of the Torah. It is of Torah God speaks in asking, *Where is the House that YE may build unto Me?*—that is, for whose sake, after all, was it rebuilt? For the sake of *All THESE hath My hand made it* (Isa. 66:2)—for the sake of Torah—*THESE being the statutes and ordinances and laws* (Lev. 26:46). But R. Joshua the Priest the son of R. Nehemiah said: For the sake of the Tribes: *All THESE are the Twelve Tribes of Israel* (Gen. 49:28).

If it were not for the Tribes' merit, Israel would not have deserved that the Temple be built for them at all. Since Elijah knew the power of the Tribes' merit, upon coming to Mount Carmel to bring Israel under the wings of the Presence,³² he took twelve stones according to the number of the Tribes, and built an altar with them, as is said *And Elijah took twelve stones, etc.*

32. Parma MS: "of heaven."

PISKA 5

SUMMARY

The great and good consequences of
the setting up of the Tabernacle

Because Moses all but gave (*kallot*) (Num. 7:1) his life for three things—the setting up of the Tabernacle, the maintenance of justice, and the Torah—the Holy One, blessed be He, linked the name of Moses with the three. The setting up of the Tabernacle established and made firm the ends of the earth; indeed it was an act equal to the creation of heaven and earth. Until the Tabernacle was set up, the world endured only because of God's mercy (Secs. 1-3).

In another comment the word *kallot* is construed as hinting at the nuptials (*klt*) of God and Israel in the wilderness following the setting up of the Tabernacle. These nuptials allowed Israel for the first time in history to bring peace offerings in the Tabernacle, offerings betokening Israel's communion with and nearness to God (Sec. 4).

Hence the verse *I am come into My garden* (Song 5:1) is taken to mean that at the time the Tabernacle was finished, God returned to the world from which, in the wake of Adam's sin, He had removed Himself (Secs. 5-7).

Since the expression *And it came to pass* (*wayēhi*) (Num. 7:1) ordinarily signifies a trouble that no other can be compared with, how account for such a somber statement when the Tabernacle was finished? Because the Tabernacle was destined to be removed from the sight of Israel and replaced by the Temple (Sec. 8).

In other comments, several teachers develop the woeful implications of *wayēhi*, as follows: (1) God said "Woe," fearful that the children of Israel, no longer busy with the building of the Tabernacle, would again fall to grumbling; (2) the first-born cried out "Woe," because henceforth they would be restrained from serving as priests; (3) the angels cried "Woe," because they were fearful that God would leave the upper regions and go down and dwell on earth below; (4) the nations cried "Woe," because they were fearful

that with the Tabernacle built, God would always side with Israel (Sec. 9).

Why the conjoining of the verse *The Lord bless thee* (Num. 6:24) with the verse *And it came to pass on the nuptial day of God and Israel* (Num. 7:1)? To intimate that no evil eye would befall this union; to intimate also the generosity of God, who, unlike kings of flesh-and-blood, bestows His blessings in advance; to intimate further that, once the Tabernacle was set up, demons came to the end of their strength in the world (Sec. 10).

The building of the Tabernacle, moreover, marked the end of God's wrath toward Israel for the making of the golden calf. Following the building of the Tabernacle, the Lord passed by before Moses and proclaimed: *The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious* (Exod. 34:6), by which He meant: "In days gone by, before Israel did that deed of theirs, I dealt with them by the measure of mercy; now once again I shall deal with them by the measure of mercy." Indeed, after the Tabernacle was set up, there was no more strife between God and the world. The Tabernacle below was set up, the Tabernacle above was set up (Sec. 11).

*And it came to pass on the day
that Moses' strength had all but
given out because of the settings up
of the Tabernacle*¹ (Num. 7:1).²

1. Let our master instruct us: [At a service], when Scripture is being read aloud, may the translator look at a written text as, [translating the Hebrew, verse by verse, into Aramaic], he follows the reader?³

1. JV: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end of setting up the Tabernacle.* But the word *klwt* may be taken in the sense of "the end of one's strength." See also below, n. 19.

2. Num. 7:1-8:5 was the lesson in the Pentateuch on the Sabbath during Hanukkah. See Sof 20:8.

3. In Rabbinic times, as the reader read the Scroll aloud, another person stood by to provide a verse by verse translation from the Hebrew of the Bible into spoken Aramaic. Even though written texts of such translations existed, it was forbidden, as will appear from the answer to this question, to use such a written translation during public worship.

Our Masters taught as follows: He who translates orally must not look at a written text [of the translation];⁴ as for the reader of Scripture, he must not, lifting his eyes away from the text of the Scroll, recite from memory, for the Torah was given solely in the form of a written text, as is said, *The Lord said: . . . I will write upon the tables* (Exod. 34:1); on the other hand, he who translates orally must not turn his eyes upon the text of the Scroll.⁵ These injunctions—so stated R. Judah [the son of R. Simon] ben Pazzi—are clearly indicated by *The Lord said unto Moses: "Write thou these words"* (Exod. 34:27), which refer to the text given in writing; and by *For these words are by mouth*⁶ (*ibid.*), which refer to the translation that must be given by word of mouth. For, as R. Judah the son of R. Simon [ben Pazzi] went on to say, the very same verse goes on to state, *I have made a covenant with thee* (*ibid.*). A covenant made by what means? By means of *Write thou these words*, and by means also of *These words are by mouth* (*ibid.*). If you maintain in written form that which was ordained to remain written, and maintain by utterance of mouth that which was ordained [to be uttered] only by mouth,⁷ then *I, [the Lord], have made a covenant with thee*. But if you set down in writing that which was ordained to be uttered by mouth and [utter] with your mouth that which was ordained to be written, then I shall not maintain My covenant with thee.⁸

4. So Jastrow, *s.v.* *kṭb*. He cites B.Meḡ 18b. But Mann equates *kṭb* with the Scroll. See his *The Bible*, p. 144, n. 148.

5. In other words, (a) the reader who recites the Scriptural lesson in its original Hebrew may not look away from the Scroll in order to recite from memory; and (b) the translator may neither read from a written text of the Aramaic version, nor check his translation by reading the Hebrew text in the Scroll, but must translate by ear, as he listens to the reader's recital.

6. JV: *for after the tenor of these words*.

7. "Together with the written Torah which Moses received at Sinai . . . God gave him the 'Oral Torah,' its authoritative exposition, which was never meant to be committed to writing. It was to have been passed on by word of mouth from master to disciple. Only the fear, in times of persecution, that the Torah would be forgotten in Israel induced the Rabbis of the third or sixth centuries of our Era to collect in written form the accumulated traditions of the 'Oral Torah.'" Jakob Petuchowski, *Ever Since Sinai* (New York, 1961), p. 85.

8. "For, as R. Judah the son of R. Simon [ben Pazzi] went on to say, the very same verse . . . shall not maintain My covenant with thee"—Parma MS.

As a matter of fact—so taught R. Judah [the Levite] son of R. Shallum—Moses asked that the Mishnah⁹ also be in written form, like the Torah. But the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that the nations¹⁰ would get to translate the Torah, and reading it, say, in Greek, would declare: "We are Israel; we are the children of the Lord." And Israel would declare: "We are the children of the Lord." The scales would appear to be balanced between both claims, but then the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the nations: "What are you claiming, that you are My children? I have no way of knowing other than that My child is he who possesses My secret lore." The nations will ask: "And what is Thy secret lore?" God will reply: "It is the Mishnah."

Are you spinning all this dialogue out on your own without any support from Scripture?¹¹ R. Judah the Levite son of R. Shallum said in reply: You are asking about the answer which the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Moses, namely, "What dost thou wish? That the Mishnah also be in written form? And what would then be the difference between Israel and the nations?" You ask, whence do we know that God answered thus? The evidence is in the verse *Had I written the full abundance*¹² of My law for him¹³ (Hos. 8:12)—had I indeed done

9. Here Mishnah probably means the whole body of early Jewish tradition handed down by word of mouth, including halakhic Midrashim.

According to some opinions, the Mishnah linked with the name of R. Judah was not committed to writing until the time of the Saboraim, that is, until the beginning of the sixth century. See H. L. Strack, *Introduction to the Talmud* (Philadelphia, 1931), p. 19; and Lieberman *HJP*, pp. 83-99.

10. "that the nations . . . but then the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the nations"—so Parma MS. PE read as follows: "that the nations would translate the Torah, and reading it in Greek, would say: 'They—the Jews—are not Israel.' Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: O Moses! The nations will say, 'We are Israel! We are the children of the Lord!' And Israel will say, 'We are the children of the Lord!' Then the scales would appear to be balanced between both claims. The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to the nations." Cf. Romans 9:6.

11. I follow Parma MS which reads *hymk*, "out of yourself" or "on your own," instead of *hy'k*, "how." For the meaning of the word *hymk*, see Epstein, *Ma'bo'*, p. 694.

12. The phrase *full abundance* is taken by R. Judah the Levite to refer to the Mishnah as well as to Scripture. In his *Novellae* on Exod. Rabbah 47:1,

such a thing, the children of Israel *would by now have been accounted as strangers, [as the Gentile nations]* (*ibid.*).

2. In another comment, [whereby we come to the theme of Moses and the Tabernacle], the verse [quoted just above from Hosea] is read: *Ever so many things of My law I write in thy name.*¹⁴ Why should things which God says are part of His law [be linked in Scripture with the name of Moses]?¹⁵ Because this particular thing, [the making of the Tabernacle], was one of three things for which Moses all but gave his life. So the Holy One, blessed be He, linked in Scripture each of the three—the maintenance of justice, the Torah, and the Tabernacle—with the name of Moses. The linking of his name with the Torah? *Remember ye the Torah of Moses My servant* (Mal. 3:22).¹⁶ And the linking of his name with the maintenance of justice? [*Moses*] *the lawgiver . . . maintained the righteous judgments of the Lord, and His ordinances among Israel*¹⁷ (Deut. 33:21). What is the proof that Moses all but gave his life for the Tabernacle? It is well-known, of course, as R. Hiyya the son of Joseph used to say, that on each of the seven days of the priests' investiture, Moses would take the Tabernacle apart twice each day and set it up again;¹⁸ indeed, according to the elder R.

Strashun suggests that *rubbe* (JV: *never so many*) may be translated "oral traditions."

13. "for him"—so Parma MS and parallel in Tanhuma, *Ki tissa'*, 34; FT: "for thee." See Targum Jonathan.

14. JV, based on MT: *Though I write for him.*

15. "Why should things . . . the name of Moses?"—Parma MS.

16. Without food for 40 days and 40 nights—almost dying for its sake—Moses on Mount Sinai meditated upon the Torah. See Num. Rabbah 12:12, and MTeh 1:16.

17. For the rendition of the verse see Rashi. As for Moses' all but giving up his life for the maintenance of justice among Israel, see Exod. 18:13 which reads: *Moses sat to judge the people; and the people stood about Moses from the morning to the evening.*

18. See Exod. 40:1, where, according to the commentator, the order to set up the Tabernacle was given solely to Moses; and see Exod. 40:17, 18, where, according to the same commentator, the setting up of the Tabernacle was done solely by Moses. See Num. Rabbah 12:18, and Rashi on Exod. 39:33.

Hanina, Moses used to take it apart and set it up again three times each day. Lest you suppose that one of the Tribe of Levi gave him a hand, our Masters taught: He used to take it apart by himself, and not a single one in Israel would or could help him. Yes, but what is the proof for this from Scripture? That which we read in the lesson: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses' strength had all but given out because of the settings up of the Tabernacle*¹⁹ (Num. 7:1).

3. *And it came to pass on the day that Moses*, etc. R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: *Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended*, etc.? (Prov. 30:4). This entire passage may be expounded as referring to God as well as to Moses. How so? *Who hath ascended up into heaven?* It is the Holy One, blessed be He: "God is gone up amidst shouting" (Ps. 47:6): As is done with a king of flesh-and-blood, when he goes from one place to another trumpets are brought and sounded before him, so was it done before the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written "With trumpets and sound of the horn shout ye before the King, the Lord" (Ps. 98:6). The words *or descended* likewise refer to the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written "And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai" (Exod. 19:20). *Who hath gathered the wind in His fists?* (Prov. 30:4) likewise refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10). *Who hath bound the waters in his garment?* (Prov. 30:4) likewise refers to the Holy One,

19. JV: *Moses had made an end of setting up the Tabernacle*. But the commentator apparently takes the word *klwt*, "made an end of," in the sense of "almost brought Moses' life to an end."

Because the Tabernacle made it possible for God to dwell on earth—its making was regarded as tantamount to the act of creation itself (see Piska 5.2, 7; and Piska 7.4)—the Rabbis refused to believe that an architect's sketch and workman's hands sufficed to set up the Tabernacle. It must have taken a daily testing and balancing of the materials, a task which only Moses could perform. According to one authority, the final setting up of the Tabernacle on the day it was dedicated was also done by Moses (see P. Yoma 1:1, 38c). I am indebted to Professor Mordecai Margulies for this illuminating comment.

blessed be He, as is written "He bindeth up the waters in His thick clouds"²⁰ (Job 26:8). *Who hath raised up all those who have come to their end upon*²¹ *the earth?* (Prov. 30:4) likewise refers to the Holy One, blessed be He, who revives the dead, as it is written "Thy dead shall live, my dead bodies shall arise" (Isa. 26:19), and so, too, "The Lord killeth, and maketh alive" (1 Sam. 2:6). *What is His name?* (Prov. 30:4). God, Shaddai, *Šēba'ot, Yah*. By whatever name He is called, He is the Lord, as is written "I am the Lord, that is My name" (Isa. 42:8). *And what is His son's name?* (Prov. 30:4). It is Israel, as is said "Thus saith the Lord: Israel is My son, My first-born" (Exod. 4:22).

In an incidental comment, the first part of the verse is read *Who hath ascended up into heaven and brought down?* (Prov. 30:4). Who is he whose prayer goes up to heaven and causes rain to come down? He who bestows his tithes in generous fistfuls. *Who hath bound the waters in his garment?* (*ibid.*). He who does not properly bestow his tithes shuts up the rain.

The next comment [takes up interpretation of the verses as referring to extraordinary men]. *Who hath ascended up into heaven?* (*ibid.*). It was Elijah, as is said "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11). *And descended?* (Prov. 30:4). The angel of the Lord said to Elijah: "Go down with him; be not afraid" (2 Kings 1:15). *Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?* [Elijah, who said]: "As the Lord, the God of Israel, liveth . . . there shall not be dew nor rain²² these years" (1 Kings 17:1). *Who hath bound the waters?* "Elijah took his mantle, and wrapped it together, and smote the waters, and they were divided" (2 Kings 2:8). *Who hath raised up all those who have*

20. So MT; PE: "in His fists."

21. The commentator takes *'šy*, "ends of," in its other meaning, "those who have come to naught in." So David Luria on Num. Rabbah 12:11. Strashun, in the addenda to his Novellae on Num. Rabbah 12:11, reads by metathesis *'šy*, that is, "those who have been gathered into [the earth]." JV: *all the ends of*.

22. During the rainy season in the Land of Israel, gusts of wind precede the fall of rain.

come to their end upon the earth? ²³ "And Elijah said: 'See, thy son liveth'" (1 Kings 17:23).

Another comment: *Who hath ascended up into heaven?* It was Moses, as is said "And Moses went up unto God" (Exod. 19:3). *And descended?* It was Moses: "And the Lord spoke unto Moses: 'Go, get thee down'" (Exod. 32:7). *Who hath gathered the wind in his fists?* It was Moses: "As soon as I am gone out of the city, I shall spread forth my hands unto the Lord" ²⁴ (Exod. 9:29). *Who hath bound the waters in a garment?* [At the bidding of Moses], "With the blast of Thy nostrils the waters were piled up" (Exod. 15:8). *Who hath established all the ends of the earth?* It was Moses. According to R. Abba bar Kahana, the reference in the last verse is to the standards in the wilderness which Moses set up [at the four points of the compass]: *Every man with his own standard, according to the ensigns* (Num. 2:2). But according to R. Simon, citing R. Joshua ben Levi, the reference is to the Tabernacle: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses' strength had all but given out because of the settings up of the Tabernacle* (Num. 7:1). ²⁵

In another comment the verse is rendered, *And it came to pass on the day that Moses' strength had all but given out because of the settings up of the habitation [of angels and men]*, ²⁶ *habitation* being a metaphor for the universe, which, so our Masters taught, "stands firm because of three things: because of the Torah, because of the service in the Tabernacle, and because of [God's] mercies" (Ab 1:2). Thus you find that twenty-six generations sprang up from the time the universe was created until the time the Torah was given; ²⁷ them, the Holy One,

23. See above, n. 21. It may also mean—as Professor Mordecai Margulies suggests in a private communication—"who raised in the hearts of all inhabitants of the earth wonder and astonishment."

24. And hold back the hail.

25. Until the Tabernacle was erected the earth is considered to have been unstable. See Num. Rabbah 12:11; and above, n. 19.

26. *Habitation* thus stands for heaven and earth.

27. Ten from Adam to Noah, ten from Noah to Abraham, and six from Abraham to Moses.

blessed be He, provided for out of His mercy. Indeed, with these twenty-six in mind, David repeated twenty-six times [in one Psalm] the words *For His mercy is provided for the universe*²⁸ (Ps. 136). Go and see for yourself [in the Psalm] and you will find the twenty-six times.²⁹

As a matter of fact, R. Huna the Priest ben Abin,³⁰ in the name of R. Aḥa, taught that at the Red Sea Moses indirectly made reference to these twenty-six generations, when he said *The people which Thou didst deliver [from destruction]*³¹ (Exod. 15:13)—meaning the twenty-six generations sprung up from the time the universe was created until the time the Torah was given—[*them*] *Thou didst lead because of Thy mercies*³² (*ibid.*). [As for the children of Israel], *Thou wouldst guide these by Thy strength* (*ibid.*),³³ by the Torah, called *strength* in a verse such as "The Lord gives strength to His people" (Ps. 29:11).³⁴ Until the time the Tabernacle was set up, what was the universe like? Like a chair which cannot stand because it has only two legs.³⁵ But as soon as the Tabernacle—referred to in the words *to Thy holy habitation* (Exod. 15:13)—was set up, the universe stood firm. Read literally, the text does not say, *And it came to pass on the day that Moses' strength had all but given out because of the settings up of the habitation* (Num. 7:1), but *the very*³⁶ *habitation*, implying a setting up of the

28. JV: *For His mercy [endureth] for ever*. But the word 'olam may be taken in the sense of either "universe" or "for ever."

29. "Go and see . . . twenty-six times"—Parma MS.

30. So Parma MS, and so emended by Friedmann; PE: 'byw.

31. From the measure of justice which demanded that these generations be destroyed.

32. MT: *mercy*.

33. JV: *Thou in Thy love hast led the people that Thou hast redeemed; Thou hast guided them in Thy strength*. The commentator, who believes that God does not repeat Himself, rejects the parallelism and makes one part of the verse apply to the generations which preceded the giving of Torah and the second part of the verse to the generation which was given the Torah.

34. See Mek, 2, 162-63.

35. God's (or Abraham's acts of) mercy and the Torah.

36. The Rabbis frequently treated the accusative particle 't—here rendered *the very*—as an extending particle which added to the text something otherwise not explicit.

universe itself—an act equal to creation of heaven and earth. That here *habitation* means universe is indicated by the verse which, describing the creation of heaven and earth, says, *It is He that spreadeth them out as a Tabernacle for habitation*³⁷ (Isa. 40:22).

4. In another comment, the verse is read: *And it came to pass on the bridal day [of Israel]*³⁸ (Num. 7:1). This reading is to be considered in the light of the verse [which quotes God as saying] *Awake, O north; and come thou south*, [and quotes Israel as replying] *Let my Beloved come into His garden* (Song 4:16).³⁹ The words *Awake, O north* mean "Awake, [O people! Hitherto, as children of Noah,⁴⁰ you were allowed to sacrifice only burnt offerings on any part of an altar]; now as the people of Torah you are to slaughter your burnt offerings only on the north side of the altar of the Tabernacle."⁴¹

Now, to be sure, said R. Eleazar ben Pēḏaṭ, the children of Noah were allowed to bring peace offerings also.⁴² And the

37. The commentator, refusing to construe the phrase *Thy holy habitation* literally as a place in which God dwells, takes it to mean "Thy universe which, hallowed through worship in the Tabernacle, ceased to totter on the brink of destruction." See Num. Rabbah 12.11; and Piska 7.4.

38. As Num. 7:1 ff. is usually translated, the predicate of the clause *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end of setting up the Tabernacle* is that the princes of Israel—as stated in verse 2—brought offerings. The commentator regards the offerings of the princes at the time of the dedication of the Tabernacle as no more important than any other event in the dedication; so he feels that the words *And it came to pass* intimate a climactic event which the text is reluctant to state explicitly. Searching for a clue to such an event, the commentator fixes upon the word *kalloṭ*, usually rendered "had made an end of." Since *kalloṭ* can also mean "bridal" or "nuptial," he concludes that the extraordinary thing, hinted at in Scripture, which came to pass on the day the Tabernacle was dedicated, was the nuptials of God and Israel.

39. Almost all Jewish commentators regard the Song of Songs as an allegory describing God's courtship of Israel.

40. The children of Noah, or Noachides, is a general term applied to all mankind before the giving of Torah at Sinai, and to all non-Israelites who did not accept the Torah at Sinai. In the present discussion, even Israelites who lived before the laws of sacrifice, as stated in Leviticus, took effect, are classed technically as children of Noah.

41. See Lev. 1:1; Zeb 5:1,4; B. Zeb 116b; Piskas 7.4 and 41.2.

42. The burnt offering—so one school maintains—was offered for sinful de-

proof? *And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock, even the fat thereof* (Gen. 4:4)—what else can *of the fat thereof* intimate except that Abel brought [peace offerings], the kind whose fat is offered up on the altar?⁴³ However, R. Jose bar Ḥanina maintained: The children of Noah were allowed to bring only burnt offerings. And what, then, did R. Jose interpret the phrase *of the fat thereof* to refer to? To the fat ones of the flock. When R. Eleazar challenged R. Jose bar R. Ḥanina, saying to him: “But it is written, *And Jethro, Moses’ father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices*”⁴⁴ (Exod. 18:12),” R. Jose bar Ḥanina replied: “I hold with him who maintains that Jethro came after the giving of Torah.” According to R. Yannai, Jethro came after the giving of the Torah, but according to the elder R. Ḥiyya, he came before the giving of Torah. When R. Eleazar said to him: “But it is written, *And he sent the young men of the children of Israel, who sacrificed peace offerings and offered burnt offerings*”⁴⁵ (Exod. 24:5), R. Jose replied: One may not deduce anything from what was done at the time of the giving of Torah, since [even before the event] innovations were already enacted according to the needs of the occasion. Or, [R. Jose might have replied] with the comment made by Hizkiah the son of R. Ḥiyya, citing a Baraita: The verse in Exodus is to be read *The young men of the children of Israel sacrificed [at that time] offerings that were entire*,⁴⁶ that is, they offered burnt offerings whole, neither flaying the animals nor cutting them up.⁴⁷

sire, for evil thoughts that come into one's mind (see Lev. Rabbah 7:3; and JE, 3, 440b). Peace offerings, on the other hand, betokening a covenant of friendship (see Gen. 34:21), indicate nearness and communion between God and His own, a relationship between God and man which, according to R. Jose who disagrees with R. Eleazar, became possible only after the revelation at Sinai.

43. See Lev. 3:16,

44. Presumably peace offerings.

45. So PE; MT: *who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings*. The incident described in this verse is regarded as having taken place on the fifth of Sivan, one day before the revelation at Sinai. See Rashi; and Meq, 2, 210.

46. He reads not *šēlamim*, “peace offerings,” but *šēlemim*, “whole offerings.”

47. They did not yet know that a burnt offering must be flayed and cut up,

In any event, as R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi, Scripture supports R. Jose bar H̄anina. Note how Scripture puts it: *This is the law of the meal offering* (Lev. 6:7); but the text does not go on to say, "This is that meal offering [which is already known to you]." Likewise Scripture says, *This is the law of the guilt offering* (Lev. 7:1); it does not go on to say, "This is that guilt offering [which is already known to you]." But when it comes to the burnt offering, what does the text say? *This is the law of the burnt offering. This is that burnt offering* (Lev. 6:2). What can *This is that burnt offering* imply except that it is the one which was offered from the beginning of time? On the other hand, when the text mentions the peace offerings, what does it say? *This is the law of the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he shall offer unto the Lord* (Lev. 7:11); here the text does not say, "which they had offered to the Lord [before]," but says, *which he shall offer unto the Lord [henceforth]*.

Indeed the passage from Song of Songs cited earlier, namely, *Awake, O north; and come in, thou south* (Song 4:16) also supports R. Jose bar R. H̄anina. One says "Awake" only to something which has fallen asleep, [such as the rite of burnt offerings formerly followed and now lapsed]; while the words *And come in, thou south* intimate [the introduction of the rite of] peace offerings which could be slain also on the south side of the altar. For, as R. Simon said in the name of R. Samuel ben R. Nahman: The verse *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings and thy peace offerings* (Exod. 20:21) means—so taught R. Reuben—

for only after the Tabernacle was set up was the practice of flaying and cutting up burnt offerings instituted. See Gen. Rabbah 22:5, and Theodor's comment in Gen. Rabbah TA, p. 208.

[The reading 'af 'al pi šanah, supported by the Parma MS, seems preferable: "(R. Eleazar) said further: It does not follow from the Torah that what they had done was an innovation. Nevertheless, R. Hizkiah taught," etc. In other words, they had offered peace offerings prior to that occasion, and R. Eleazar thought that the contrary opinion was based on an *argumentum ex silentio*, which he considered not cogent. L. N.]

that [for the first time in history] an altar [was provided] fit for burnt offerings and fit also for peace offerings; its one half to the north fit for burnt offerings, and its other half to the south fit for peace offerings.⁴⁸ The words *Blow upon My garden, that the spices thereof may flow out* (Song 4:16) refer to incense of spices. *Let my Beloved come into His garden* (*ibid.*)—here, by the way, according to R. Nehunya, the Torah teaches good manners: A bridegroom is not to enter until the bride gives him leave—and *eat his precious fruits* (*ibid.*), these being the offerings.

5. *I am [already] come into My garden, My sister, My bride* (Song 5:1). In this verse, to whom is God likened? To a king who commanded the people of a province to build a palace, and they built it. Then there they were, the people of the province at the entrance to the palace, crying out and saying, "Let the king come into the palace!" What did the king do? He entered the palace through a side door and sent his herald forth to say, "Cry no more, I am already come into the palace." So, too, after the Tabernacle was set up, Israel kept saying, *Let my Beloved come into His garden*. The Holy One, blessed be He, sent word saying to them: Wherefore are you anxious? Already *I am come into My garden, My sister, My bride*.

A further comment: *I am come into My garden*. R. Simeon bar Yosne said, The text does not read: "I am come into a garden," but *into My garden*. What is meant by *into My garden*? It means the garden from which I removed Myself, as is said "The Lord God hastened and went upward"⁴⁹ from the garden"⁵⁰ (Gen. 3:8). *I have gathered My myrrh with My spice* (Song 5:1). The reference is to the incense of spices. *I have eaten My liquid honey as well as My honeycomb*⁵¹ (*ibid.*). The phrase

48. See Mek, 2, 286; and B.Zeb 58a.

49. See Gen. Rabbah 19:7, where *miḥallek*, usually translated "walking," is also read "hastened and went upward."

50. In this comment, the Garden of Eden is taken to be the world from which God removed Himself after Adam sinned, and to which He came back after the Tabernacle was built.

51. JV: *My honeycomb with My honey*. See Gesenius, *Lexicon*, s.v. *y'r*.

My liquid honey stands for the highest kind of sacrifices which are wholly consumed on the altar even as liquid honey is eaten—all of it; and the phrase *My honeycomb* stands for sacrifices of a less important kind, [only parts of which are consumed on the altar even as only the honey in the honeycomb can be eaten.]⁵² *I have drunk My wine with My fat*⁵³ (*ibid.*). These words refer to libations and to pieces of fat which are burnt on the altar.

Or *I have gathered My myrrh with My spice; I have eaten My liquid honey with My honeycomb; I have drunk My wine with My fat* (*ibid.*) may refer—as R. Levi said in the name of R. Simeon bar Yosne⁵⁴—to three things which the princes did improperly, but which nevertheless the Holy One, blessed be He, accepted. (1) An individual may not donate incense of spices; and yet each prince was allowed to bring incense, as is said *One golden pan of ten shekels, full of incense* (Num. 7:14). (2) An individual may not bring a sin offering unless he is aware of his sin, as is said *If his sin . . . be known to him, he shall bring for his offering a goat* (Lev. 4:23); yet each and every prince made a sin offering for [a sin] of which he was not aware, as is said *His offering was . . . one male of the goats for a sin offering* (Num. 7:16). (3) An individual's offering does not take precedence of the Sabbath;⁵⁵ but the offering of a certain prince did take precedence of the Sabbath, as is written *On the seventh day . . . the . . . prince of the children of Ephraim* (Num. 7:48).

Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved (Song 5:1)—the friends here are the people of Israel whom God addressed thus when He said, “for My brethren and friends’ sakes” (Ps. 122:8).⁵⁶

Another comment: *Let my Beloved come into His garden (ganno)* (Song 4:16). Read not *ganno* but *ginnuno*, into His

52. See *‘Eṣ Yosef* on Song Rabbah 5:1.

53. Usual translation, *My milk*.

54. “as R. Levi . . . Yosne”—Parma MS.

55. An individual's offering may not be offered on the Sabbath, since that would require labor not provided for by the law.

56. Cf. MTeh 4:3.

nuptial chamber. Entered it on what day? *It came to pass on the KLT day*, [when] *Moses set up the Tabernacle* (Num. 7:1), which—so said R. Joshua of Siknin citing R. Levi—means the day that [Israel] the bride entered into her nuptial chamber, for in the words *And it came to pass on the KLT day*, the word KLT is so spelled as to permit it to be read *kallat*—that is, “nuptial.”⁵⁷

6. In another comment, the words are read *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end of setting up the Tabernacle* (Num. 7:1). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse, *For there is a man whose labor is with wisdom, and with knowledge, and with skill* (Eccles. 2:21). Such a man was Bezalel who made the Tabernacle with wisdom and with knowledge, as is written “I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge” (Exod. 31:3). *Yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion* (Eccles. 2:21). Such a man was Moses who did not labor at the [making of the] Tabernacle, and yet it was called after his name, as is said *And it came to pass on the day*, etc. The text does not go on to say, “that Bezalel had made an end of,” but *that Moses had made an end of*. Hence *Yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall he leave it for his portion*.

7. In another comment, the words *And it came to pass* are read *And it came to be* (Num. 7:1); that which He said, He did. According to R. Joshua ben Levi, the Holy One, blessed be He, stipulated with Israel, while they were still in Egypt, that He would not bring them out thence unless they made Him a Tabernacle, that He might cause His presence to dwell among them, as is said, *And they shall know that I am the Lord their God, that brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them* (Exod. 29:46). And when the Taber-

57. The word *klt* is usually translated “made an end of,” as though spelled *kltw*, the spelling in MT. But *Minhat* say on Num. 7:1 cites several references to the defective spelling of this word.

nacle was set up, and the Presence came down and dwelt among them—in that hour all the stipulations were met. Accordingly, Scripture says, *And it came to be*: what He said, He did.

Another comment: *And it came to be*.⁵⁸ According to Rab, it refers to a thing which up to this time had not been created in the world. From the time the world was created, the Presence had not dwelt on the earth below; but after the Tabernacle was set up, *It*—the Presence—came to dwell on the earth below.

But R. Simeon ben Yoḥai's comment on the verse was as follows: What is meant by *And [again] it came to be*? It refers to a thing which was and then had ceased to be, and then again became as it had been. Thus you find that at the beginning of the creation of the world, the Presence was on the earth below, as is written *And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden* (Gen. 3:8). After Adam sinned, the Presence removed itself to the first firmament. After Cain rose up and slew his brother, it removed itself to the second firmament. After the generation of Enosh arose and sinned—*Then set in profanation in calling upon the name of the Lord* (Gen. 4:26)⁵⁹—it removed itself to the third firmament. After the generation of the flood arose and they sinned, as is written *And the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great* (Gen. 6:5), it removed itself to the fourth firmament. After the generation of the dispersion of races arose, and they sinned, saying *Come, let us build us a city*⁶⁰ (Gen. 11:4), the Presence removed itself to the fifth

58. See Gen. 1:3 ff.

59. Deriving *hwhl* from *hll*, "profane." See Rashi. The margin in AV, *Then men began to call themselves by the name of the Lord*, which gives substantially the same meaning, has reference to such names as *Mehujael* (Gen. 4:18), "He will remain alive as though he were God," or *Mahalalel* (Gen. 5:15), "He is to be praised as God."

The translation, represented by JV, *Then began men to call upon the Lord*, the commentator deems unacceptable, since in his view Abraham was the first man who *called upon the name of the Lord* (Gen. 12:8).

Enosh's contemporaries brought upon themselves a partial flood (see [Piska 48:2]); and he himself was the forbear of successive generations whose cumulative sins brought on the great flood.

60. "and they sinned, saying, *Come, let us build us a city*"—Parma MS.

firmament. After the Sodomites arose, it removed itself to the sixth, because they were sinners: *Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners* (Gen. 13:13). After the Philistines came and sinned—*And Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah* (Gen. 20:2)—it removed itself to the seventh.

Then came Abraham and laid by good deeds, and the Presence came down from the seventh firmament to the sixth. Isaac came and stretched out his neck upon the altar, and it came down from the sixth to the fifth. Jacob came and put up tents for Torah, as is written *And Jacob was a perfect man, dwelling in the tents [of Torah]*⁶¹ (Gen. 25:27), and the Presence came down from the fifth to the fourth. Levi came and brought it down from the fourth to the third. Kohath⁶² came and brought it down from the third to the second. Amram⁶² came and brought it down to the first. How happy are the righteous, for they are the ones who cause the Presence to dwell on earth, as thus it is written: *Verily, the upright shall cause [it] to dwell*⁶³ *on earth* (Prov. 2:21). Moses came and brought it down to the earth below, as is written, *Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting and the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle* (Exod. 40:34).

It is written *Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee* (1 Kings 8:27). Yet here Scripture says, *And the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle*. R. Joshua of Siknin explained in the name of R. Levi: To what is the Tabernacle compared? To a cave opening on the edge of the sea. When the sea rushes up, the cave is filled, yet the sea loses nothing. So, too, though it is written, *And the glory of the Lord filled the Tabernacle*, yet the worlds above and the worlds below lost nothing of the splendor of the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written *Do not I fill both heaven and earth, saith the Lord?* (Jer. 23:24).

61. See Onkelos, and Gen. Rabbah 63:10.

62. Kohath the son of Levi, and Amram grandson of Levi and father of Moses, were among the seven pious men of the world. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, Index, s.vv.

63. By a slight change of vowels, *yīškēnu*, "shall dwell," may be read *yāškinu*, "shall cause to dwell."

For this reason Scripture says here, *And [again] it came to be!* For as the Presence had been below at the beginning of the creation of the world, and later removed itself above, so now it returned to stay below as it once had. And this *came to be on the day that Moses had made an end of setting up the Tabernacle* (Num. 7:1).

8. Another comment: *And it came to pass on the day.* R. Hiyya the son of R. Abba said in the name of R. Johanan: The following interpretation came to us from Babylonia: Whenever Scripture says, *And it came to pass*, it means to say there was no trouble like it [—a startling statement in view of *And it came to pass*, etc., set down in connection with the building of the Tabernacle]. R. Simeon the son of R. Abba explained, however, that [R. Johanan intended his statement to be qualified, for] the expression may be taken one way or another:⁶⁴ Whenever Scripture says, *And it came to pass in the days*, it means to say there was no trouble like it: *Now it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus* (Esther 1:1). Was there any trouble greater than the one of those days? *And it came to pass in the days when the judges judged*⁶⁵ (Ruth 1:1). Was there any trouble greater than the one of those days? And the same can be said of all other accounts that begin with the words "It came to pass in the days of . . ." But whenever Scripture simply says, *And it came to pass*, it means to say there was no joy like it: "*Let there be light.*" *And light came to pass*⁶⁶ (Gen. 1:3). Was there any joy greater than this? *And it came to pass on the eighth day*⁶⁷ (Lev. 9:1).

64. Literally "it ministers to this and to that," that is it may be used to indicate trouble or joy. See Piska 7.5.

65. At that time God sent down one of the ten seasons of famine which He had ordained as disciplinary measures for mankind (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4, 30). This particular famine was marked by a scarcity of bread as well as of Torah. See Ruth Zuṭa B, p. 45.

Possibly the commentator construes the phrase *in the days of Ahasuerus*, or even of the judges, as an evil time, for mortals and not God—who is only the source of good—are said to have been in power.

66. JV: *and there was light.*

67. Of the rites in the Tabernacle during which the priests were installed in their sacred office.

Was there joy greater than this? As for the verse which is now being expounded, *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*, can you find any occasion for joy greater than this?

[However, R. Hiyya's recension of R. Johanan's opinion may also be demonstrated as true according to what] R. Samuel ben Nahman asserted: Whenever Scripture says, *And it came to pass*, it means to say there was no trouble like it; and whenever Scripture says, *And it was*, it means to say there was no joy like it. Some scholars challenged R. Samuel ben Nahman, saying to him: But Scripture says, *And there came to pass light!* Why do you say there is trouble in that? He replied: Because the [perfect] light of the first day of creation was destined to be stored away and replaced by the light of the luminaries.⁶⁸ They said to him: But Scripture says, *And it came to pass on the eighth day!* (Lev. 9:1). Why do you say there is trouble in that? He replied: Because Nadab and Abihu were to die. They said to him: But Scripture says, *And it came to pass on the day Moses had made an end!* He replied: Here, too, trouble is signified, because the Tabernacle was destined to be removed from sight⁶⁹ and replaced by the Temple. They said to him: But Scripture says, *And it was when Jerusalem was taken!* (Jer. 38:28). He replied: There was no joy like it. For had not Jerusalem been taken, the prophet would not have been able to say that Israel had received her punishment in full, as is written, *The punishment of thine iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Zion*⁷⁰ (Lam. 5:22).

9. In another comment, the verse is read *And there was woe* (*wayēhi*)⁷¹ *on the day that Moses had made an end*. Who was the one saying Woe? According to R. Abba, it was the Holy One, blessed be He—if one dare speak thus of Him—said Woe!

68. The perfect light, replaced by the light of the sun and the moon, will shine again in the days of the Messiah. See Piska 42.4.

69. See 1 Kings 8:4; and Lev. Rabbah 9:7.

70. See Piska 1.5, 2.6; and MTeh 79:3,4.

71. Play on the syllable *way* in *wayēhi*, which in Aramaic means "woe."

What parable applies here? That of a king who had a grumbler for wife. Whereupon the king said to her: "Make me⁷² a purple cloak." All the time that she was busy with the purple cloak she did not grumble. After a time she finished the purple cloak, gave it to a launderer who washed it, and then the queen brought it to the king. When the king saw her, he began to cry Woe! She said to him: "My lord the king, your purple cloak is ready, and you cry Woe!" He replied: "For fear you will again become a grumbler!" Thus you find that Israel always used to grumble, as is written *And the people murmured against Moses and against Aaron*⁷³ (Exod. 15:24); and so, too, *And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured* (Exod. 16:2); and so, too, they murmured *Ye have killed the people of the Lord* (Num. 17:6). It was because of their murmuring that the Holy One, blessed be He, asked them to put their hands to the making of the Tabernacle, as is written *And let them make Me the Sanctuary* (Exod. 25:8). Now you find that all the time they were busy with the work of the Tabernacle, they did not grumble. But no sooner had they finished building the Tabernacle, than the Holy One, blessed be He, began to cry Woe! *And there was woe (wayēhi) on the day that Moses ended*. They said: Master of the universe, the building of the Tabernacle is ended, and Thou criest Woe! God replied: I shall tell you why I cry Woe—for fear that certain people⁷⁴ will go back to grumbling as they used to grumble.

Another comment: *And there was woe (wayēhi) on the day*. Who cried Woe? The first-born said "Woe," because the priesthood was taken from them. For, as our Masters taught: "Before the Tabernacle was set up, use of high places was permitted for sacrifice, and divine service [at altars] was carried on by the first-born" (Zeb 14:4). Thus in saying just before the revelation at Sinai, *Let not the priests and the people break through to*

72. So parallel in Num. Rabbah 12:7. Parma MS: "Make for her"; PE: "Make for yourself."

73. *and against Aaron* is not in MT.

74. Literally "they," deliberately substituted for "you."

come up unto the Lord (Exod. 19:24), Scripture implies that up to the time referred to in the verse, Torah not having been given, and priesthood not having been given to Aaron, [the first-born, designated in Scripture as priests, were permitted to bring offerings at altars].⁷⁵ But in saying, *Let not the priests and the people break through*, [the text clearly speaks of priests and not of first-born]. R. Joshua ben Kōrḥah and Rabbi [Judah the Prince] differed in their explanations. One, [as has just been stated], said: "By priests the first-born are meant here."⁷⁶ And his colleague said: "No. Nadab and Abihu, [Aaron's sons who ranked high in Israel's official hierarchy], are meant."

Likewise, in the verse *The golden thing hath ceased. The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked* (Isa. 14:4-5) Scripture alludes—so says R. Abba bar Memel—to the first-born, [who because they made offerings to the golden calf and thus provided a staff for the wicked, had forfeited their right to the priesthood].⁷⁷ And so when the Tabernacle was set up, the first-born cried out Woe! *And there was woe (wayēhi) on the day.*

Another comment: *And there was woe (wayēhi).* Who said Woe? The angels said Woe! They conjectured: Now that the Tabernacle is built, the Holy One, blessed be He, will leave the upper regions and go down and dwell on the earth below. But the Holy One, blessed be He, appeased the [dwellers in] the upper regions, saying to them: By your lives, the Source will still remain above, as is written, *His glory covereth the heavens, and the earth is full of His praise* (Hab. 3:3). R. Simon said in the name of R. Joshua [ben Levi]:⁷⁸ The Holy One, blessed be He, jollied them along in saying that the Source will remain above, for it is written as follows: *His glory is upon earth and*

75. Exod. 24:4 reads *And he (Moses) sent the young men* (i.e. first-born) *who offered burnt offerings . . . unto the Lord.*

76. See B.Zeb 116b.

77. See Exod. 34.

78. "R. Simon . . . R. Joshua [ben Levi]"—corrected at the suggestion of Professor Mordecai Margulies. PE and Parma MS: "R. Simon said in the name of R. Simeon, citing R. Joshua."

heaven. For He hath lifted up a horn⁷⁹ for His people (Ps. 148:13, 14)—first upon the earth, and only afterwards in heaven. For this reason, the angels said Woe (*wayěhi*)! *And there was woe on the day that Moses had made an end.*

Another comment: *And there was woe (wayěhi).* Who said Woe? The nations of the earth said Woe! Why did they say Woe? Because, as they said, even before the Holy One, blessed be He, came to dwell among Israel, He used to maintain their cause and wage their wars. But now that they have made Him a Tabernacle and He dwells among them, how much more and more will He do for them! Therefore they said Woe (*wayěhi*)! *And there was woe on the day that Moses had made an end.*

10. Another comment: *And it came to pass on the nuptial day [of God and Israel].*⁸⁰ What does Scripture have directly before the passage which we are now expounding? The Priestly Benediction: *The Lord bless thee* (Num. 6:24). R. Joshua of Siknin said: What parable applies here? That of a king who betrothed his daughter and made elaborate festivities for her betrothal. An evil eye, however, prevailed over all. When the king went on to give his daughter in marriage, what did he do? He gave her an amulet, saying to her: "Wear this amulet that the evil eye may no longer prevail over you." Even so when the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to give Torah to Israel at Sinai, He made a great demonstration for them, as is written, *And all the people perceived the thunderings* (Exod. 20:15). This verse, however, refers only to the betrothal, as is said, *Go unto the people, and hallow them [through betrothal unto Me]* (Exod. 19:10); but the evil eye prevailed over the betrothal, and the Tablets were broken, as is said, *Moses . . . broke them beneath the Mount* (Exod. 32:19). Before long, when Israel came and made the

79. The horn is identified as the Torah, and the Torah is taken to be the glory of God.

80. The word *klwt*, "made an end of," is here taken in its other meaning of "bridal" or "nuptial."

Tabernacle, the Holy One, blessed be He, first gave them the blessings, [*The Lord bless thee*, etc.], in order that the evil eye have no power over them. For this reason, Scripture says first, *The Lord bless thee*; and after that, *And it came to pass on the nuptial day*.

Another comment: Why does Scripture first say *The Lord bless thee*, and after that *And it came to pass*? R. Abbahu explained: The ways of the Holy One, blessed be He, are not like the ways of a mortal. When a mortal king comes to a city, and the inhabitants of the city applaud him, praise, and honor him, then in due course he may provide for all their needs—build public buildings for them and act so as to please the city's inhabitants. But the Holy One, blessed be He, does not act like that. Even before Israel made the Tabernacle He first gave them the blessings, as is written, *The Lord bless thee*, and after that, *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*.

Another comment: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*. R. Judah the son of R. Shallum said in the name of R. Levi: There is no space on earth, not even a space so small that it holds only a fourth of a *ḳab* of seed,⁸¹ that does not hold nine *ḳab* of demons. But after the Tabernacle was set up, so taught R. Johanan, demons came to an end in the world, as is written *There shall no evil thing befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh by reason of thy Tent* (Ps. 91:10),⁸² that is to say, once the Tent of the Tabernacle was set up.⁸³ Resh Lakish said: Why need I have the Book of Psalms quoted at me when this teaching is in Torah? *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee*—keep thee from demons, of course. When did this blessing take effect? *It came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*.

81. Measurements of fields are usually indicated by the amount of seed that can be sowed in them. Cf. Piska 4.3.

82. Moses is said to have written this Psalm directly after he set up the Tabernacle.

83. As long as the Tabernacle remained standing, the influence of demons diminished, increasing after the Tabernacle was destroyed, and again after the Temple was destroyed. See MTeh 7:9.

A variant of the same comment: The text does not say "And it came to pass on the day that Moses had set up," but says *on the day that Moses had made an end*—the day, that is, that demons had come to an end in the world.

11. Another comment: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*. A different discourse is begun with the verse, *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and gaze upon king Solomon* (Song 3:11), and is expounded along the lines set forth in the commentary on the Song of Songs.⁸⁴

Another comment: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse, *I will hear what God the Lord*⁸⁵ *will speak; for He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints; but let them not turn back to folly* (Ps. 85:9). You find that when Israel did that deed of theirs,⁸⁶ the Holy One, blessed be He, was angry at them, as is written, *I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stiff-necked people* (Exod. 32:9). Thereupon Moses rose up and pleaded for mercy directly of the Holy One, blessed be He, and that He be reconciled with Israel, as is written *And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said: Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot? . . . Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against Thy people* (Exod. 32:11). At once the Holy One, blessed be He, became reconciled with them, as is written *And the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people* (Exod. 32:14).

<When the Tabernacle was made—so said R. Judah bar Simon—> and Moses went and inclined his ear⁸⁷ in the Tabernacle, [wondering], "Is it possible that there is still something against Israel in the heart of the Holy One, blessed be He?" his question was of the same kind suggested in the verse *I will hear whether God the Lord will speak* (Ps. 85:9). For how is such

84. See Song Rabbah.

85. So MT and Parma MS. In P and FT the words *the Lord* do not occur.

86. A euphemism for the making of the golden calf.

87. So Parma MS. PE: "laid low his head." However, *mrbs*, "laid low," appears to be a corruption of *mrkyn*, "incline." See Targum Jer. 25:4.

a reference to *God*, [in His aspect of strict justice],⁸⁸ coupled with *Lord*, [His aspect of mercy], to be construed? As follows: Were the text to speak only of God, it would imply His intention to continue in just wrath against the children of Israel. But the text goes on to speak of God as Lord, as "The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious" (Exod. 34:6), clearly implying the possibility that He may comport Himself toward them in His aspect of mercy.⁸⁹ Hence [in reply to Moses' question], the Holy One, blessed be He, at once reassured Moses that there was nothing against Israel in His heart, as is written, *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed: The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious* (Exod. 34:6). In connection with this verse, R. Simon said: Why does the text say twice, *The Lord, the Lord*? It must be that the Lord was reassuring Moses, saying to him: Moses, in days gone by, before they did that deed of theirs, I dealt with them by the measure of mercy, and so even now, I deal with them by the measure of mercy.

Now Moses would stand and the Word would come into his ear as through some sort of pipe,⁹⁰ so that none other of the children of Israel could hear it. When Moses' face flushed, however, they knew that the Word had come to him.

According to R. Berechiah the Priest who cited R. Judah bar R. Simon, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Moses, in days gone by, there was enmity between Me and My children, there was hatred between Me and My children, strife between Me and My children. But now there is love between Me and My children, friendship between Me and My children, companion-

88. See Piska 1.2, at the beginning; and MTeh 56:3.

89. In the passage "his question . . . in His aspect of mercy," I follow Professor Mordecai Margulies' suggestion which involves a slight emendation of the text. As it stands, the text may be read: "his question was of the same kind suggested by the verse *I will hear whether God [or] the Lord will speak* (Ps. 85:9). If God, [in His aspect of strict justice], then one may conclude that He still continues in His wrath against them. But if the Lord will speak, then He is dealing with them in mercy: *The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious* (Exod. 34:6)."

90. The "pipe" or "duct" may be a circular flame. See Num. Rabbah, 14, end.

ship between Me and My children," as the verse *Verily He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints*, intimates.

Another comment: *For He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints*. According to R. Joshua the Priest the son of R. Nehemiah, R. Eleazar taught as follows: Before the Tabernacle was set up, there was strife in the world; but after it was set up, peace was made in the world. And the proof? *For He will speak peace unto His people, and to His saints*. When? *When [by means of the Tabernacle] glory is made to dwell in our land, surely His salvation will be nigh them that fear Him* (Ps. 85:10).

Resh Lakish said: Why need I have the Book of Psalms quoted at me when this teaching is in Torah? *The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace* (Num. 6:26). When? *On the day that Moses had made an end of setting up the Tabernacle*.

Another comment: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*. R. Joshua ben Levi said: By means of a hint the Holy One, blessed be He, told Israel that while they were making the Tabernacle He would give them the blessings. Where is the hint? In the verse *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto Me*, etc. . . . *in every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee* (Exod. 20:21).⁹¹ When they made the [altar in the] Tabernacle, the Holy One, blessed be He, gave them the blessings. *The Lord bless thee, and keep thee*. When was this said? *On the day when Moses was making an end*.

Another comment: *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end of setting up this same Tabernacle*. R. Simon said: At the time the Holy One, blessed be He, told Israel to set up the Tabernacle, He hinted that as the Tabernacle below was being set up, the Tabernacle above was being set up, as is said *And it came to pass on the day that Moses had made an end*, etc. The verse does not conclude by saying, "to set up a

91. See Mek, 2, 284.

Tabernacle," but *the same Tabernacle*—that is, the same one as the Tabernacle above.⁹²

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "When the Tabernacle stood in this world, I commanded Aaron and his sons that they be the ones to bless you; but in the time-to-come, I, with My very own glory, will bless you, for thus it is written, *The Lord bless thee out of Zion; even He that made heaven and earth*" (Ps. 134:3).

92. According to Jewish tradition, the Tabernacle on earth was the counterpart of the one in heaven. See Mek, 2, 78; and MTeh 30:1. Cf. Hebrews 8:4-5.

PISKA 6

SUMMARY

The building of Solomon's Temple

The words *Seest thou a man diligent in his work* (Prov. 22:29), applied successively to Joseph, to Moses, to Daniel, and finally to Solomon, are thereby linked with the lead verse of the Piska: *Thus all the work that Solomon wrought in the House of the Lord was finished (wtšlm)* (1 Kings 7:51) (Secs. 2-3).

Solomon's zeal in finishing the House of the Lord before he began to build his own house saved him from the destiny he would have otherwise merited, the destiny of being included with the three kings and the four commoners who have no portion in the world-to-come. Moreover, his zeal earned him a place at the head of a genealogical table in Scripture and spread peace (*šlm*) all about him (Sec. 4).

Another homily construes *wtšlm* (previously read "finished" and "spread peace") in the sense of "compensated." The Tabernacle which Moses built was finished in Kislev but dedicated in Nisan, in order to bring the rejoicing over the Tabernacle into Nisan, into the month in which Isaac was born. Did Kislev suffer any loss therefor? Not at all. It was compensated in the days of the Hasmoneans by having the Temple rededicated during Kislev. Even so Solomon's Temple, finished in Marheshvan, was dedicated in Tishri, to have the rejoicing over the Temple brought into the month in which Abraham was born. Even as Kislev was compensated, so one may expect Marheshvan to be compensated with another dedication when the Temple will have been rebuilt (Sec. 5).

The text continues with further comment on *wtšlm* as meaning "finished": *All the work . . . is finished* (1 Kings 7:51). The finishing of the Temple made it possible for God to declare that the work of creating heaven and earth was finished. The declaration is implied in the name Solomon, which means "he who is destined to finish the work of creation" (Sec. 6).

A number of miracles attended the building of the Temple. During its construction not one of the workmen took sick, no trowel nor

axe was broken. In order to prevent the nations from imitating the Temple, the lives of the workmen who built the Temple were finished as soon as they finished their work. In the world-to-come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will give them their reward.

According to other traditions, the Temple built itself: stones came flying, each of them mounting itself in its proper place. Even spirits and demons joined in the building of the Temple.

We are told further in regard to the building of the Temple that Solomon made no use whatever of the gold and silver that David had accumulated. Either he wanted to keep the nations from saying that their gods would some day take revenge on David and destroy his Temple because he had pillaged their gold and silver, or else he thought that David had done wrong in not using his gold and silver to feed the people during the famine in his days (Sec. 7).

Finally, as a craftsman from the Tribe of Dan joined with a craftsman from the Tribe of Judah in the building of the Tabernacle, so a man from the Tribe of Dan joined again with a man from the Tribe of Judah in the building of the Temple. Hence an artistic tradition of the two Tribes was continued, and the rule that a man should not give up his trade held firm. Since God is our trade and the precious metal we work with, the conclusion is that we are bound to Him for ever (Sec. 8).

*Thus all the work that Solomon
wrought in the House of the Lord
was finished (1 Kings 7:51).¹*

1. Let our master instruct us: Suppose a Hanukkah lamp has some oil left over in it, what is to be done with the oil? Our Masters—as already stated above²—taught us: A Hanukkah lamp which has some oil left over, etc. . . . it is forbidden to make use of that oil [for any other purpose].

You find that Hanukkah—this feast of dedication which we celebrate—is in remembrance of the dedication [of the altar] by

1. When a second Sabbath fell during the eight days of Hanukkah, this verse was apparently read as the conclusion of the haftarah (see B.Meğ 31a). Today the practice is to stop with verse 50—that is, with the verse preceding.

2. See Piska 3.1.

the Hasmonean family. Because they carried on a war and were victorious over the people of Greece, we kindle lamps to this day.

So too, after the work of the Tabernacle was finished, a hanukkah—a rite of dedication—was celebrated, as is written, *This was the dedication of the altar* (Num. 7:84). And the same of the Temple: after it was built, a hanukkah—a rite of dedication—was celebrated for it, as is written, *So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the House of the Lord* (1 Kings 8:63).³ When did they dedicate it? Directly after all of the work on it was finished. And the proof? The lesson for the day in the Prophets: *Thus all the work that king Solomon wrought in the House of the Lord was finished*, [the word *finished* indicating an occasion calling for rites of dedication].⁴

2. *Thus all the work . . . was finished.* R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of what the holy spirit said through Solomon: *Seest thou a man diligent in his work? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure men* (Prov. 22:29). The words *Seest thou a man diligent in his work* refer to Joseph: "And it came to pass on a certain day, when he went into the house to do his work" (Gen. 39:11). (The "certain day," according to R. Judah, was a fête day for the Nile, when everyone would go out to the fetid⁵ Nile, except for Joseph who went inside the house to do his work; according to R. Nehemiah, however, the "certain day" was a day of entertainment in the theater and the circus). [Observing Joseph at his work], the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Thou art zealous in thy work. As thou livest, I say, *He shall stand before kings*: "And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Gen.

3. Since this verse, about the dedication of the Temple, occurs some time after it is stated that Solomon's work in the House of the Lord was finished, the question is asked, "When did they dedicate the House of the Lord? Did they not dedicate it directly after the work of building was finished?"

4. See Piska 2.6.

5. "fête . . . fetid" is an attempt to render the original pun *zēbul*, "temple, festival," and *zibbul*, "covering with dung, with manure."

41:46). *He shall not stand before obscure men*—need not stand before Potiphar⁶ who was an obscure man.

Another comment: The words *Seest thou a man diligent in his business* refer to Moses, diligent in his work, leading the flock to the farthest end of the wilderness.⁷ With like diligence in regard to the shepherds, he made peace between them and the daughters of Jethro, for he drew water and watered the flock of the former; then drew and watered the flock of the latter; as the daughters of Jethro said: *And besides he drew and drew*⁸ (Exod. 2:19). Thereupon—so stated R. Judah—the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Thou hast been diligent in thy work. As thou livest, I say, *He shall stand before kings*: "Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh" (Exod. 8:16); <*He shall not stand before obscure men*—not before Jethro.> R. Nehemiah said to R. Judah: "You have made the sacred profane! The verse in Proverbs does not imply, as you have expounded it, that Moses would stand before Pharaoh. Actually the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Thou hast been diligent in thy work before Pharaoh. Therefore come now and act as intermediary between Me and My children, who are called kings,⁹ as in the verse 'And ye shall be unto Me a congregation of kings who are priests'¹⁰ (Exod. 19:6). I say, *He shall not stand before obscure men*—not before Pharaoh whose light is to grow obscure."

3. Another comment: The words *Seest thou a man diligent in his work* refer to Daniel, who said: "Then I rose up, and did the king's business" (Dan. 8:27). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Thou hast been diligent in thy work. In days gone

6. "Potiphar"—Parma MS, SPR, and so emended by MC; PE: "Pharaoh."

7. In order to keep his cattle from grazing in fields which belonged to other people. See Exod. Rabbah 2:3.

8. JV: *Moreover, he drew water*. But see Lev. Rabbah 34:8, where two actions are taken to be implied in the repetition of the infinitive and perfect forms of the verb "draw water."

9. "kings"—so Parma MS; PE: "a kingdom."

10. JV: "a kingdom of priests."

by thou didst sit and guard the gates of mortals: "Daniel sat¹¹ in the gate of the king" (Dan. 2:49); but now that thou hast been diligent in thy work, come and attend to My Temple: "Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundations of the House of God" (Ezra 5:16). And why was Daniel given the name Sheshbazzar? Because in his lifetime six (*shesh*) ordeals (*zar*)¹² came (*ba'*): his ordeal in the lion pit;¹³ the ordeal of Hananiah and his companions in the fiery furnace;¹⁴ the ordeal referred to in the verse *Then the decree went forth, and the wise men were to be slain; and they sought Daniel and his companions to be slain* (Dan. 2:13); the ordeal of Jehoiachin's being carried away into exile; the ordeal of Jehoiakim's being carried away into exile; and finally the ordeal of Zedekiah's being carried away into exile.¹⁵

4. Another comment: The words *Seest thou a man diligent in his work* refer to Solomon. In what particular work? In the work of the Temple. You find that when Solomon built his own house, he built it in thirteen years; but when he built the Temple, he built it in seven years: *And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, wherein Solomon had built the two houses*, etc. (1 Kings 9:10). [The twenty years were divided thus:] *In the eleventh year, in the month Bul . . . was the House [of God] finished . . . So he was seven years in building it* (1 Kings 6:38). *And Solomon was building his own house thirteen years* (1 Kings 7:1). He who hears that Solomon spent thirteen years building his own house and seven years building the House of the Holy One, blessed be He, may think that Solomon's house was perhaps larger than that of the Holy One, blessed be He. Not at all! With building his own house he was slothful; but he was not slothful with the House of the Holy One, blessed be He. Nay more, he put the honor of the Holy One, blessed

11. "sat" not in MT.

12. Sheshbazzar thus means "ordeals came six times."

13. Dan. 6:17 ff.

14. Dan. 3:20.

15. See 2 Kings, 24.

be He, before his own honor.¹⁶ Therefore, Nathan, [speaking for God], asked Solomon's father: *Shalt thou build Me*¹⁷ *a House?* (2 Sam. 7:5); and in another verse, went on to say, *Thou shalt not build* (1 Chron. 17:4), [whereby, speaking for God, he was saying: "David,] thou didst put thy honor before My honor. Only after thou didst see thyself dwelling in a house of cedarwood didst thou seek whereby to build the Temple: *And David said to Nathan: Lo, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the Ark of God dwelleth within curtains* (1 Chron. 17:1, combined with 2 Sam. 7:2). Solomon, however, put My honor before his own honor: *And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul . . . was the House [of God] finished through all the parts thereof, and according to all the fashion of it* (1 Kings 6:38); and only afterwards *Solomon was building his own house* (1 Kings 7:1)."

Now because he was zealous concerning the Temple, Solomon won the right to be spoken of as one of the righteous kings. And why is it remarkable that he was so described? Because, as R. Joshua ben Levi explained: Solomon, of whom it is said *For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods* (1 Kings 11:4), deserved no more than to be counted with the three kings and the four commoners who, the Sages tell us,¹⁸ have no portion in the world-to-come (Sanh 10:2). But since he was zealous concerning the Temple, he was not classed with them¹⁹—with those benighted kings, Jeroboam, Ahab, and Manasseh—but earned instead the right to be listed with the righteous kings. *Seest thou a man diligent in His work? He shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before obscure men*—shall not stand to suffer the dark fate²⁰ of Jeroboam and of Ahab.

Nay more, said R. Levi, Solomon was put at the head of a genealogical table. [Note the wording of the two tables in which

16. He built the Temple before he built his own house.

17. So MT; in PE the word *Me* does not occur.

18. "the Sages tell us"—Parma MS.

19. "so as to be counted"—deleted, as in Parma MS.

20. Reading *kēr*, "evil fate," or perhaps *klēros*, "fate" (cf. MTeh 10:5), instead of *ķir*, which is difficult to explain.

the genealogy of Solomon is involved. In Ruth the table reads]: *These are the generations of Perez: Perez begat Hezron, etc., etc., and Jesse begat David* (Ruth 4:18-22), and at the point where one would have expected the text in Ruth to go on with "and David begat Solomon," Scripture stops just before naming Solomon, but then has another genealogical table, the one in Chronicles, begin with his name: *And Solomon's*²¹ *son was Rehoboam* (1 Chron. 3:10). What accounted for Solomon's being named first in the table? It was his zeal concerning the work of building the Temple. And it was the work of building the Temple which spread peace about him, as is said *Thus all the work . . . was finished (wtšlm)*, implying that there was peace (*wthy šlm*) as the result of all the work.

5. Another comment: *Thus all the work . . . was finished*. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thy thoughts are very deep* (Ps. 92:6). Come and behold the miracles of the Holy One, blessed be He! He creates worlds within worlds.²² As He created His world, He created both men and demons in it: the demons see men, but men do not see the demons. He created demons and ministering angels: the ministering angels see the demons, but the demons do not see the ministering angels. He created ministering angels, demons, and men: He sees them all, but no creatures can see Him. Hence *Thy thoughts are very deep*.

Another comment: *How great are Thy works*, etc. What is meant by *Thy thoughts are very deep*? R. Hanina said: The work of the Tabernacle was finished on the twenty-fifth of Kislev; but the Tabernacle stayed packed away until the first of Nisan.²³ For, in keeping with God's behest, Moses waited till

21. One might have expected the genealogy of the Tribe of Judah to have begun with Judah, the father of the Tribe, and not with Solomon. Thus Solomon won the distinction that in a genealogical table in Scripture *he stood before* [that is, at the head of a succession of] *kings*.

22. The words "He created worlds and within each of them (?) created men" are deleted, as in Parma MS.

23. Packed away during the months of Tevet, Shevat, and Adar—for a little over three months.

the first of Nisan to rear it: *On the first day of the first month shalt thou rear up the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting* (Exod. 40:2). And all the time that it stayed packed away Israel kept sneering at Moses, saying: "Why has the Tabernacle not been set up immediately? May it be that some fault has occurred in the making of it?" [They did not know that it was God's] intention to bring the rejoicing over the Tabernacle into the month in which Isaac was born—and Isaac was born in Nisan.²⁴ Whence do we know that Isaac was born in Nisan? From Scripture: for when the angels came to Abraham, what he said to Sarah was "*Knead it, and [quickly] make cakes [before the dough rises]*" (Gen. 18:6), the time being Passover.²⁵ Then they said to him: *I will certainly return unto thee at the time of the mark*; ²⁶ *and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son* (Gen. 18:10). What can the expression *at the time of the mark* ²⁷ possibly mean, except—so taught R. Zabdi ben Levi—that the angels made a mark on the wall, [saying that the following Nisan], when the sun came around again to this point, [Sarah would have a son].²⁸

It did not take long. When Nisan came and the Tabernacle was set up, no man sneered at Moses any more. Now since it happened thus, did Kislev, the month during which the work on the Tabernacle was actually finished, suffer any loss? Not at

24. By a play on words (*Yšḥk* = *ys' ḥk*) the name Isaac is taken to mean "He whose birth brought a new statute (*ḥk*)—circumcision—to the world" (see Gen. Rabbah 53:7). Consequently here the intention was to have God appear in a Tabernacle on the earth for the first time, as Rab maintains (see Piska 5:7), in the same month in which Isaac, whose birth ushered in a new statute, was born.

25. Which falls in Nisan. See Gen. 19:3; and Gen. Rabbah 48:12.

26. JV: *when the season cometh round*. But the English translation is free with the word *hyh*, which may mean "life," "alive," or "scratch," in which latter sense R. Zabdi ben Levi understands the word.

27. The Hebrew phrase *k'ṭ hyh* is thus taken to mean "the time of the mark" or "of the scratch"; and the word *hyh*, "scratch," is taken to be a form of *mhyh*, "mark" (Lev. 13:10, 24).

28. Rabbinic commentators read Gen. 21:2 as follows: *And Sarah . . . bore Abraham a son . . . at the festival [of Passover], as God had spoken to him.*

all! For what can the expression *wtšlm*²⁹ really intimate except that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: It is for Me to compensate (*šlm*)³⁰ the month for its loss. And how did the Holy One, blessed be He, compensate it? By putting into it the celebration of the Hanukkah under the Hasmonean house.

The same sort of thing happened to Solomon. He finished the work of the Temple in the month of Marheshvan: *And in the eleventh year, in the month Bul . . . was the House finished* (1 Kings 6:38). (Can *the month Bul* mean anything except [Marheshvan], the month in which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought the flood [*mabbul*]?)³¹ But because the Temple stayed locked up for twelve months, everyone was sneering at Solomon, saying: "Is he not the son of Bath-sheba?"³² How can the Holy One, blessed be He, cause His presence to dwell in the handiwork of such a man?" They did not know it was God's intention to bring the rejoicing at the completion of the Temple into the month in which Abraham was born, *into the month of the Ethanim* (1 Kings 8:2), which is Tishri. Why should the seventh month be described as *of the Ethanim*? To tell us that Tishri, [the seventh month], is the month of the birth of Abraham, who in the verse *Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite*³³ (Ps. 89:1) is referred to as *Ethan*, "the enduring rock."³⁴ And during all the twelve months that the Temple stayed locked up, even

29. 1 Kings 7:51; usually translated *was finished*. This expression, which deals with the Temple, is by Midrashic license applied to incidents concerning the Tabernacle.

30. *Šlm* may mean either "finish" or "compensate."

31. See B.RH 11b.

32. See 2 Sam. 11-12.

33. With an assist from Isa. 41:2, the word *Ezrahite* is taken to refer to Abraham, "the man from the East [who first aroused mankind to take refuge under the wings of the Presence]." See MTeh 110:1.

34. According to one tradition, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—each "an enduring rock," an *Ethan*—were born in the month of Tishri (see B.RH 11a). Hence *Ethanim*, the plural of *Ethan*. Tishri thus becomes "the month in which were born the Patriarchs, men [whose works] are as enduring as rocks." According to another tradition, the Patriarchs were born in Nisan (*ibid.*, and above, in this Section).

though all the work of the Temple was finished, its being locked up made it seem as though Solomon had done nothing at all. But as soon as it was opened in [Tishri], the month of the festivals, and offerings were brought and the fire came down on the altar, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Now is the work finished: *Thus all the work . . . was finished* (1 Kings 7:51). And will Marheshvan suffer any loss? Not at all! The Holy One, blessed be He, said: It is for Me to compensate (*šlm*) the month. *Thus all the work . . . was [to be] compensated (wtšlm)*.

6. In another comment, the words are read *Now all the work . . . is finished*: not "the work," but *ALL the work*—that is, on the day the work on the Temple was finished, God declared as finished the work of the six days of creation, for the text in Genesis, *He rested . . . from ALL His work which God created to make* (Gen. 2:3), does not, as one would expect, say "and made," but *to make*, that is, one more work remained to be made [for creation to be considered as finished]. Only when Solomon came and built the Temple would the Holy One, blessed be He, say that the work of creating heaven and earth was now finished: *Now ALL the work . . . is finished*. Indeed, he was called Solomon ["he who is destined to finish"] because it was through the work of his hands that the Holy One, blessed be He, completed the work of the six days of creation.³⁵

7. In another comment, the expression *wtšlm* is taken to mean [not *was finished*, but] "proceeded in peace" (*šlw*m). While the workmen were building it not one of them died, not one of them took sick. No trowel nor axe was broken, not an eye felt pain, not even a shoe thong was cut.³⁶ Not a tool used in the work of building was broken, not a single one was worn out or even dented. Hence it is said *Thus all the work proceeded in peace*.

35. See Piska 5:3; and Num. Rabbah 12:13.

36. Instead of "not even a shoe thong" FT suggests "neither belt nor shoe," [the preferable reading, since 'ezor appears to have been used only in the sense of "belt, girdle." L. N.]

And if you are astonished, [hear what] R. Eleazar says: Such a thing has happened before, and in honor of mere flesh-and-blood, too! Among all those Egyptians who went up with Joseph escorting Jacob to his burial place—*And Joseph went up to bury his father; and with him went up all the servants of Pharaoh*, etc. (Gen. 50:7)—not an object belonging to one of them was broken.³⁷ And so in regard to a building belonging to the Holy One, blessed be He, why should you be astonished that the same thing happened?

Another comment: *Thus . . . all the work was finished* (*wtšlm*)—when the workmen finished the work, their life was finished. Truly? But a moment ago you taught that not one of them took sick, not one of them had a pain in his eyes, and now you say that when they finished their work, they died! It was the decree of the Holy One, blessed be He, however, that the nations of the earth should not draft the workmen and build buildings with their help and say, "These are the same men who together with Solomon built God's own structure." What, besides, does the expression *wtšlm* intimate in regard to these men? That the Holy One, blessed be He, said: It is for Me to give them their reward (*šlw*) [in the world-to-come]. Scripture deliberately uses the word *wtšlm*, [a word which means "was finished" and means also "to receive reward"].

In another comment, the verse is read *Thus the entire work . . . finished itself*. What is meant by the expression *the entire work*, etc.? That [each stone] came flying and mounted [to its proper place] so that the building got built of itself.³⁸ The text does not say "And the House, when it was being built," but says, *For the House as it built itself* (1 Kings 6:7); and goes on to say, *was built of stones made ready [and] brought thither* (*ibid.*). What is implied by expressions such as *was built*, and *brought thither*? R. Berechiah said: Every stone brought itself, lifted

37. This is inferred from Gen. 50:14, where it is said that Joseph returned, he, and all that went up with him to bury his father. The term *all* intimates that nothing untoward had happened to any of them during the entire journey. See Friedmann's n. 47.

38. Literally "that the building got built of itself, springing up rapidly."

itself, and built itself into the building. Indeed in his song, when Solomon exclaimed *I have built Thee a builded*³⁹ *House of habitation* (1 Kings 8:13), he resorted to the unusual expression *I have built Thee a builded [House]*, to say thereby: As I was building the building, the stones came flying and mounted up of their own accord.

And if you are astonished [at this, then take note that] the Holy One, blessed be He, made the same thing happen for a certain righteous man: *And a stone brought itself, and laid itself upon the mouth of the den* (Dan. 6:18). Now how did they get a stone in Babylon⁴⁰ unless, as our Masters explained, it rolled from the Land of Israel and arrived just for a particular moment's use? And if the Lord did thus for flesh-and-blood, why should you be astonished that such a thing was done for the building of the House of the Holy One, blessed be He?

Another comment: *For the House, when it was in building* (1 Kings 6:7) means, as R. Huna said in the name of R. Joseph, [that the House of God which Solomon built seemed to build itself, for] anything, even spirits, even demons, are willing to assist the King [of kings].⁴¹

<In another comment, the verse is read> *Thus all the work . . . was perfect* (1 Kings 7:51). What precedes this verse? The statement that *The hinges, both for the doors of . . . the Most Holy Place, and for the doors of . . . the Temple [were] of gold* (1 Kings 7:50). And directly after it? *Thus all the work . . . was perfect*. As to the meaning of the word *perfect* in this context, R. Isaac of Magdala and R. Simon differed. According to R. Isaac of Magdala, it meant that [even] the pivots of the hinges were of gold. But according to R. Simon, it meant that even the parts of the pivots that were put into the wall⁴² were of gold. Indeed, if the hinges did not have every single part of a⁴³

39. Apparently the infinitive absolute *bnh* is taken to mean "that which was already built." JV: *I have surely built Thee*.

40. In Babylon they used bricks, since stone was scarce. See Gen. 11:3.

41. Cf. Exod. Rabbah 52:4; and Rashi on Exod. 39:33.

42. "even the parts of the pivots that were put into the wall"—Parma MS, which instead of *sir*, "hinge," reads *kir*, "wall." PE: "sockets of the door pins."

43. "every single part of a"—Parma MS.

pivot [made of gold], the work would not have been described as *perfect*.

And the hinges . . . for . . . the doors of the House, that is, of the Temple, [were] of gold. What follows in the text? *Thus all the work . . . was completed. After that Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated [for the building of the Temple], the silver, and the gold, and the vessels, and put them into the Treasuries of the House of the Lord.* Now why did Solomon feel that the things accumulated by his father for the building of the Temple were not⁴⁴ to be used, [and instead were to be put aside in the Treasuries]? According to some, Solomon's action was creditable to David; while according to others it was discreditable. As for the interpretation in a creditable sense, David prayed for the very thing which Solomon did, saying to God: "Master of the universe, by the prophetic gift which is mine I foresee that the Temple will be destroyed in the end. And everything, alas, which I mean to dedicate [for the building of God's House] comes out of temples for idolatry which I have been destroying." [David was anxious] that the nations of the earth should be unable to say: "What does David—the man who destroyed the houses of our gods and made himself a house for his own⁴⁵ god [out of the loot]—what does he think, that his sin was wiped off the slate?"⁴⁶ [Indeed not!] Our gods bestirred themselves, took their revenge, and destroyed the house of his⁴⁷ god." Therefore David prayed that Solomon should have no need for the things which he, David, had dedicated.

And now to him who interprets Solomon's action as discreditable to David: In the days of David, famine came for three years. And David had—who knows how many?—treasuries piled up with silver and gold which he had prepared for building the Temple, treasuries all of which he should have spent to keep people alive; but he did not do so. God said to him: "My chil-

44. "not"—Parma MS.

45. "his own"—Parma MS.

46. "what does he think, that his sin was wiped off the slate?"—Parma MS.

47. "his"—Parma MS.

dren are dying of hunger, and thou pilest up riches wherewith to build a building. With such riches thou shouldest have done nothing other than keep people alive. Yet thou hast not done so. As thou livest, Solomon will find no need to take any of it." *And Solomon brought in the things [which David his father had dedicated] . . . and put them into the Treasuries of the House of the Lord*, for, as the work was brought to completion, Solomon found he had no need [of the silver or the gold which his father had dedicated for the building of the Temple]. *Thus all the work . . . was completed* [without David's silver or gold].

8. Another comment: *Thus all the work . . . was finished*. You find that when the Tabernacle was built, two Tribes were partners in the work, namely, the Tribe of Dan and the Tribe of Judah—as R. Levi said in the name of R. Ḥama the son of R. Ḥanina—the Tribe of Judah, [represented by] Bezalel, and the Tribe of Dan, by *Oholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the Tribe of Dan* (Exod. 35:34). So, [years later], the same two Tribes were partners in the work of building the Temple: *And king Solomon sent and out of Tyre fetched Hiram* (1 Kings 7:13), a widow's son of the Tribe of Dan;⁴⁸ and Solomon himself was the son of David who was of the Tribe of Judah. [From the fact of this partnership through the years] it follows, R. Levi went on to say in the name of R. Ḥama the son of R. Ḥanina, that a man should not give up his family business, even as the verse *And the Almighty shall be thy precious ores*⁴⁹ (Job 22:25) [teaches us what our family business is]: that Thou art our God and our precious thing, and we are to remain Thy people. As David put it: *For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the flock of His hand. Today, if ye would but hearken to His voice* (Ps. 95:7).

48. *And now I have . . . Hiram my master craftsman, the son of a woman of the daughters of Dan* (2 Chron 2:12-13).

49. So Gesenius, *Lexicon*, s.v. *ḥsr*, which Jastrow (185b) takes figuratively in the sense of "trade" or "family trade," and also "support."

PISKA 7

SUMMARY

Nahshon's offering in the Tabernacle and God's favoring of the humble

Because the altar was Israel's means of expiation, the honor of bringing the first offering in the Tabernacle was Nahshon's: he was the first to leap into the Red Sea and thereby he sanctified God's name (Sec. 1). It is further noted that he was a descendant of Judah, a man of humble spirit, who, unlike the proud who is brought low, ultimately attains to honor. The contrasting fate of the proud and the humble is exemplified in what befell Adam the proud and Abraham the humble; Pharaoh the proud and Moses the humble; Amalek and Joshua; the haughty Tabor and Carmel and the lowly Sinai. Judah, it is pointed out, humbled himself for the sake of a brother who was the youngest of the young (Secs. 2-3).

The phrase *the first day* (Num. 7:12) referring to the day in which Nahshon brought his offering is construed by one Amora to mean that on that day God was at last able to dwell on the earth below with His creatures, and so regarded it as the first day of creation. It was a day marked by ten other distinctions (Sec. 4).

In connection with the dedication of the Tabernacle and the offerings brought by the princes, the phrase *And it came to pass* (Num. 7:1), a phrase hinting at joy as well as trouble, is explained (Sec. 5).

Returning to the matter of Judah's humility, the commentator points to certain linguistic peculiarities in Num. 7:12 as constituting a warning to Judah not to act pridefully against his brothers (Sec. 6). These linguistic peculiarities are also taken to mean that all the Tribes of Israel were equally beloved of God, God Himself having said to Israel: *Thou art all fair, My love* (Song 4:7) (Sec. 7).

*And he that presented his offering
the first day was Nahshon the son of
Amminadab, of the Tribe of Judah (Num. 7:12).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: Which side of the ramp leading to the altar did he who went up to the altar use? Our Masters of the Mishnah taught as follows: "All [the priests] in going up to the altar used the right side [of the ramp]; then, moving all around [the altar],² they came down on the left side [of the ramp]" (Zeb 6:3); for, as R. Juliana ben Ṭabri³ said in the name of R. Isaac, the ramp belonging to the altar [was wide, so wide that its annual rebuilding] used to cost the High Priest sixty centenaries of gold. Why [in his zeal did he go to such expense]? Because the altar was Israel's means of expiation.

So, too, you find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, said that the children of Israel were to make a Tabernacle, they immediately went at it with zeal, as is written *And EVERY wise-hearted man among them that wrought the work made the Tabernacle*, etc. (Exod. 36:8). Then, when the Tabernacle was set up, and the princes came to bring offerings, they asked: "Moses, who shall offer first?" Thereupon—so taught R. Simeon ben Yoḥai—the Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses to reply: "He who hallowed My Name at the sea, Nahshon,⁴ shall offer first." Forthwith Nahshon brought his offering first. And the proof? The lesson for the day, *And he that presented his offering the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab*, etc.

2. *And he that presented*, etc. R. Tanḥuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered

1. Num. 7:1-17 was the lesson in the Pentateuch on the first day of Hanukkah.

2. For whatever they had to do, e.g. sprinkle the blood or arrange the wood-pile. See Zeb 5:3.

3. "Juliana ben Ṭabri"—so Parma MS. See Piska 14.13, where R. Lulianos the son of R. Ṭibur is cited. PE: "R. Yolimna ben Abdi."

4. See below, Piska 7.6.

in the light of what Solomon was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *A man's pride shall bring him low, but he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor* (Prov. 29:23). The first part of the verse, *A man's pride shall bring him low*, applies to Adam; while the end of the verse, *but he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor* applies to our father Abraham. How so? ⁵ The first part, *A man's pride shall bring him low*, applies to Adam who transgressed the command of the Holy One, blessed be He, and ate of the tree. Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, desirous that Adam repent, opened wide for him the gate of repentance which Adam chose not to enter, [as evident from the verse] *And the Lord God said: "Behold, Adam is become as one who by himself would choose good or evil,⁶ even now."* [But when Adam said]: "No," ⁷ [God then asked]: "Shall he be allowed to put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life?" ⁸ (Gen. 3:22). The verse is thus construed in accordance with the interpretation of R. Abba bar Kahana: "How else is the phrase *even now* to be understood except that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Adam: 'Repent even now,'⁹ and I will receive thee! To which Adam replied: 'No, I will not'—hence the sense of the verse is that the Holy One, blessed be He, says "[Repent] even now," and Adam replies "No, I will not."

5. "The first part of the verse, *A man's pride . . .* to our father Abraham. How so?"—Parma MS.

6. So interpreted by R. 'Aqiba in Mek, 1, 248, n. 3. JV: *Behold, the man is become as one of us*. R. 'Aqiba, finding such a translation unacceptable, prefers to take *mimmenu* ("as one of us") not as the first person plural but as the third person singular, that is "by himself."

7. The word *pn* in the usual sense of "lest" or "perhaps," which would imply uncertainty in the mind of God, the commentator finds unacceptable (see B.Ber 3b). And so, taking *pn* as a form of *pnh*, "turn away," he construes it as meaning "no," in which sense the word *pn* occurs in the verse *The way of life she prepareth not (pn) for herself* (Prov. 5:6). See Gesenius, *Lexicon*, s.v. *pn*.

8. That is shall one unrepentant live for ever and be permitted to cause endless mischief?

9. The term '*th*', "now," occurs in contexts in which repentance is demanded, as in the verse *Even now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God* (Deut. 10:12). Hence R. Abba bar Kahana so understands *even now* in this context.

Indeed, as R. Simeon ben Lakish used to say, [so great was Adam's pride], that even after judgment was passed upon him, he fell to reviling and blaspheming, as evident from the reference to cherubim in the verse *So He drove out Adam; and He placed at the . . . east of . . . Eden the cherubim . . . to keep the way to the tree of life* (Gen. 3:24). Now a like reference to cherubim occurs in the verse in which, after Sennacherib's messengers came to him, Hezekiah prayed: *O Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, that sittest upon the cherubim* (Isa. 37:16). And even as in Hezekiah's prayer the God who sits upon the cherubim was invoked by Hezekiah because of Sennacherib's revilings and blasphemies, so, Genesis tells us, cherubim had to be placed east of Eden because of Adam's revilings and blasphemies.¹⁰ Hence, *A man's, [Adam's],¹¹ pride shall bring him low*: Because he acted pridefully against the Holy One, blessed be He, refusing to repent, God brought him low, and he was driven out of the Garden of Eden.

The end of the verse, *But he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor*, refers to our father Abraham,¹² who, as the verse "the greatest man among the Anakim [the giants]"¹³ (Josh. 14:15) implies, was even greater in [moral] stature than Adam was [before he sinned].¹⁴ Nevertheless, humbling himself,

10. Refusing to accept the implication that the cherubim were necessary to prevent Adam's physical re-entrance into the Garden of Eden, the commentator takes their presence as symbolic of Adam's attack upon God with prideful and blasphemous utterances. See also Gen. Rabbah 19:12.

11. '*Adam*' means "man" as well as the first Adam, thus allowing a play on words.

12. "refers to our father Abraham"—Parma MS.

13. The complete verse reads in JV, "Now the name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-arba, which Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim." But then, as Friedmann explains, Arba was the father of the Anakim (Josh. 15:13-14), and since they were his sons, it is not likely that Scripture would describe Arba as the greatest among his own sons. Accordingly, R. Tanhuma takes the latter part of Josh. 14:15 to refer to another, indeed far greater, resident of the town of Hebron, namely, to Abraham, and reads the verse as follows: "Now the name of Hebron beforetime was Kiriath-arba (the city of Arba), which city was the place where the greatest man among the Anakim, [the giants, once lived]."

14. Cf. Piskas 15.3, 10; [49.5]; and Gen. Rabbah 14:6.

Abraham said: *I . . . am but dust and ashes* (Gen. 18:27). Therefore did the Holy One, blessed be He, call him "the greatest man among the Anakim [the giants]" (Josh. 14:15).

3. Another comment: *A man's pride shall bring him low*. So it was with Pharaoh who acted pridefully against Moses, saying, "*Who is the Lord that I should hearken unto His voice?*" (Exod. 5:2). *But he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor*. Such a man was Moses who said to Pharaoh: "*Have thou this glory over me; against what time shall I entreat for thee?*" (Exod. 8:5). And said also: "*As soon as I am gone out of the city, I shall spread forth my hands unto the Lord*"¹⁵ (Exod. 9:29).

Another comment: *A man's pride shall bring him low*. So it was with Amalek who besides his verbal revilings and blasphemies violated even the male organ, as he acted pridefully against the Holy One, blessed be He. For Amalek used to take the male members from Israelites' bodies, and throwing the members aloft, reviled God, saying: Is this the thing which Thou didst choose for Thyself? *But he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor*. Such a man was Joshua.¹⁶

Another comment: *A man's pride shall bring him low*. The reference is here to Mounts Tabor and Carmel which, coming from the end of the world, acted pridefully, saying: "We are lofty, and upon us will the Holy One, blessed be He, give the Torah."¹⁷ *But he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor*. Such was Sinai which humbled itself saying: But I am low!

15. Not pretending that he, unaided by God, could perform miracles.

16. See Exod. 17:13, and Num. 11:26-28. When Eldad and Medad prophesied that Joshua, who defeated Amalek in battle, was to lead the children of Israel into the Promised Land, Joshua, because of his humility, advised Moses that the two be put in prison. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3, 252.

The words "and Eleazar" which follow "Joshua" are deleted, as in the parallel in Num. Rabbah 13:3.

17. The commentator assumes that the two mountains originally stood outside the Land of Israel, but that because they offered themselves as mountains on which the Torah could be given they were permitted to enter the Land of Israel. See Gen. Rabbah 99:1 and Strashun's note referring to B.Meğ 29a and Num. Rabbah 13; and MTeh 68:9.

And because of this the Holy One, blessed be He, set glory upon it, and the Torah was given upon it—indeed it earned the honor of having the Holy One, blessed be He, come down upon it and stand upon it, as is said *And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the Mount* (Exod. 19:20).¹⁸

Another comment: *A man's pride shall bring him low. But he that is of humble spirit shall attain to honor.* The path of possible interpretation remains wide, so we shall come directly to the lesson for the day: The latter words apply to Judah, who humbled himself before Joseph for the sake of Benjamin, saying, "*O my lord, let thy servant, I pray thee, speak in my lord's ears* (Gen. 44:18); *Now, therefore, let thy servant, I pray thee, abide instead of the lad a bondman to my lord*" (Gen. 44:33). Thereupon—so taught R. Berechiah, citing R. Levi—the Holy One, blessed be He, said: For the sake of thy brother [Benjamin] who was youngest of the young, thou didst humble thyself before thy brother [Joseph] who was younger than thou. As thou livest, when the Tabernacle is set up and the Tribes come to present offerings, not one of them¹⁹ will offer up ahead of thee. Behold, I will accord thee honor, for thou wilt be the one who will offer up first: *And he that presented his . . . the first day was Nahshon the son of Amminadab, of the Tribe of Judah.* Hence, *But he that is of a humble spirit shall attain to honor.*

4. In another comment, R. Samuel bar Ammi²⁰ taught the following: [One would expect the text to say "the day the Tabernacle was set up"], but the text says *the first day* (Num. 7:12). [Now in the account of the offerings in the Tabernacle by the princes of Israel], how shall the phrase *the first day* be understood except as indirectly implying that from the moment the Holy One, blessed be He, created the world He desired to dwell on the earth below with His creatures. You will note that at the

18. See Mek, 2, 224.

19. "not one of them"—as in Parma MS; PE: "no man."

20. "R. Samuel bar Ammi"—Parma MS; P and FT: "R. Samuel bar Matta."

end of the first day of creation the words actually used are *And there was evening and there was morning, the day of the [Solitary] One*²¹ (Gen. 1:5)—not, as one would expect, “the first day,” in keeping with what the text goes on to say, *a second day, a third day, but the day of the [Solitary] One*. Now why *the day of the [Solitary] One*? Because even on the day the Holy One, blessed be He, was still all alone in His world, [not yet having made its creatures], He already desired to dwell on the earth below with His creatures.²² But because of their willfulness,²³ He could not do so until the Tabernacle was set up, the Tabernacle in which the Holy One, blessed be He, finally made His presence dwell. Then, when the princes came to present their offerings, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let the text read as if to imply that on this day²⁴ the world was created. Hence not “on the day that the Tabernacle was set up” but *on the first day [of creation]*. For how else shall the phrase *the first day* be construed save as an intimation that [what God had desired] from the first day of creation, [was at long last made possible on the day the Tabernacle was set up].²⁵

In another comment, the phrase is read *The day which was the first*—*first* standing for the first day in the week, the day creation was begun; standing for the first day in the ministry of the Aaronic priesthood;²⁶ standing for the day on which secular princes presented offerings to God for the first time; the day on which the Presence dwelt for the first time among the Israelites:²⁷ *And I will dwell among My people*²⁸ *Israel* (Exod. 29:4); the day on which the daily communal offering was

21. The Hebrew phrase may be rendered “one day” or “the day of the One.”

22. Which, as yet, did not exist. How much greater, then, must His desire have been to live with them after they were created.

23. “But because of their willfulness”—see Piska 5.7.

24. “on this day”—so Parma MS; PE: “on the first day.”

25. Cf. Gen. Rabbah 3:9.

26. Until that day the first-born presided at the bringing of offerings. See Piska 5.9.

27. “the day on which the Presence dwelt for the first time among the Israelites”—Parma MS.

28. MT: *the children of*.

made for the first time;²⁹ the day on which the priestly blessing was invoked for the first time;³⁰ the day on which Nisan was sanctified for the first time as the first month in the months of the year; the day on which the use of high places for private sacrifices was prohibited for the first time;³¹ the day on which the regulation that certain sacrifices were to be slaughtered only on the north side of the altar went into effect for the first time;³² the day on which the regulation that hallowed things were to be eaten [only within the enclosure of the Tabernacle] went into effect for the first time;³³ the day on which fire on an altar came down from the Lord for the first time.³⁴

5. In another comment, [it is noted that the account of the offering of the princes] begins with the expression *And it came to pass* (*wayēhi*). Now we know—so R. Simeon bar Abba taught in the name of R. Johanan—that a hint of joy as well as a hint of trouble is to be found in the expression *And it came to pass*, whenever it occurs in Scripture.³⁵ Accordingly, since at the time the princes presented their offerings, the Lord had joy like that of the day on which the world was created, why should Scripture say *And it came to pass*? Because it means to intimate thereby that it was foreseen by the Lord that soon the princes would go along with Korah in his dis-

29. Such as the daily offering of lambs, one in the morning and the other at dusk.

30. "the day on which the priestly blessing was invoked for the first time"—Parma MS.

31. Since sacrifices could now be offered on the altar in the court of the Tabernacle. See Lev. 17:5, Deut. 12:13, and Zeb 14:4.

32. Whereas on high places a sacrifice could be slaughtered on any part of the altar. See Zeb 5:1; and Piska 5.4.

33. "the day on which the regulation that hallowed things were to be eaten [only within the enclosure of the Tabernacle] went into effect for the first time"—Parma MS.

34. *And there came forth fire from before the Lord, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat* (Lev. 9:24). Cf. Piskas 2.5, 4.2. Concerning the day the Tabernacle was dedicated, the day which received ten crowns, see B. Shab 87b, and Rashi on Lev. 9:1.

35. See Piska 5.8.

sension. Therefore Scripture says *And it came to pass*. [Should one ask, "But how does Scripture make known to us the misdemeanor of the princes?", one may answer with] R. Judah the son of R. Sima, who cited R. Levi ben Pěraṭa: Indirectly. It is as though the son of one of the city fathers³⁶ stole things in a bathhouse, and the attendant of the bath, afraid to come right out with the name of the thief, managed nevertheless, by speaking of "A handsome youth dressed in white," to make his identity known. So, too, even though Scripture does not come right out with the names of the princes who, sharing with Korah in dissension, went along with him, nevertheless Scripture makes their identity known by means of a hint: *princes of the congregation, the elect men of the assembly, men of renown* (Num. 16:2). Therefore the account of the offering of the princes begins with the expression *And it came to pass* (*wayēhi*), [hinting trouble as well as joy].

6. Another comment: *And he that presented his offering the first day was Nahshon of the Tribe of Judah; and his offering was . . .* (Num. 7:12). [At the dedication of the Tabernacle] Nahshon presented his offering on the first day, but the text says *AND his offering*, words one would not expect. Of the offering brought on the first day one would expect "his offering"; and of each of the offerings brought on subsequent days, "and his offering." But the text uses instead the phrase *AND his offering* with reference to the offering on the first day; and the phrase *his offering* with reference to each of the offerings brought on subsequent days.³⁷ [This unexpected wording of the text], R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest explained as follows: For the very reason that Judah presented his offering on

36. So Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, p. 425. Or, according to Jastrow, 103b, "managers."

37. In the passage beginning "[At the dedication of the Tabernacle], Nahshon presented his offering," and ending with "each of the offerings brought on subsequent days," I follow Parma MS. PE: "When the text speaks of the offerings of all the other princes, it simply says *his offering* [without the *and*]. What is the reason?"

the first day,³⁸ the Holy One, blessed be He, made certain [by means of the unexpected wording of the text] that if Judah should take to acting pridefully against his brothers and say to them: "I am more honored than you, for [at the dedication of the Tabernacle] I presented my offering at the beginning," they will be able to reply: "You are the one of whose offering Scripture says *AND his offering*, as though it were the last of the offerings."

Another comment: Why should the expression *AND his offering* be used with reference to the prince who presented his offering on the first day,³⁹ except to indicate thereby, as R. Yudan said, that all the princes were considered as equal in importance.⁴⁰

Another comment: *And he that presented his offering the first day was Nahshon of the Tribe of Judah* (Num. 7:12). Why was Nahshon given the right to bring his offering on the first day? Because he hallowed the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, by going down first into the surf of the sea (*Nahshol*). When all the Tribes were standing at the sea as it was about to divide itself, Benjamin was the only one of all the Tribes ready to give up his life by going bravely into the sea, ready to hallow the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, ([Benjamin's bravery being intimated in the verse] *There is Benjamin, the youngest*, *RODEM* ⁴¹ (Ps. 68:28), a word which is to be read *rod-yam*, "braving the sea"). But when Judah saw Benjamin [start into the sea], Judah's people began hurling stones at Benjamin so that the Tribe of Judah instead would be the first to go down. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Since Judah went down first into the sea and hallowed My name,

38. "For the very reason that Judah presented his offering on the first day"—so Parma MS; PE: "It was on account of Judah who presented his offering on the first day."

39. "with reference to the prince who presented his offering on the first day"—so Parma MS; PE: "Why is the expression *and his offering* used on the first day?"

40. Hence in regard to the first day the text reads *AND his offering*, as though intimating that the offering on that day had been preceded by offerings made on the preceding eleven days. See Num. Rabbah 13:14.

41. Usually rendered *ruling them*.

let him present his offering on the first day: *And he that presented his offering the first day was Nahshon . . . of the Tribe of Judah.*⁴²

7. Another comment: *And it came to pass on the first day.* The expression *And it came to pass*, [hinting trouble as well as joy], is to be considered in the light of *Thou art all fair, My love; there is no blemish in thee* (Song 4:7)—words which God uttered to Israel [after the revelation at Sinai].⁴³ How could such a thing have been said to Israel except to imply that at the moment the children of Israel accepted the Torah, all of them became sound in body, so that among them there was not one lame, not one blind, not one dumb, and not one deaf?⁴⁴ But subsequently, when they sinned through that deed of theirs, all of them became afflicted with flux and leprosy, as evident from the verse *When Moses saw that the people were uncovered (paru'a)* (Exod. 32:25), [*uncovered* in this instance pointing to leprosy, as in the verse] *The leper in whom the plague is, his clothes shall be rent, and his head uncovered (paru'a)*⁴⁵ (Lev. 13:45).

Another comment: The words *Thou art all fair* were addressed to all the Fathers of the Tribes. And should you say, "But at the time their father Jacob blessed the Fathers of the Tribes he went out of his way to chide Reuben, Simeon, and

42. In causing the Tribe of Benjamin to retreat from the sea, Judah manifested his talent for kingship, a talent requiring strong-arm methods now and then.

Since the offerings of the princes represented the Hebrew aristocracy's homage to God, the Tribe of Judah, which was to inherit kingship, was given the right to bring its offering on the first day of the dedication of the Tabernacle. The Tribe of Benjamin, on the other hand, more gentle than Judah, was rewarded by having the Temple of Solomon located within its territory. Cf. Meq, 1, 232-37; Num. Rabbah 12:20, 13:4, and 13:7; and MTeh 76:2 and 114:8.

43. In keeping with the interpretation of the Song of Songs as an account of God's courtship of Israel at the time of the events at Sinai. See Piska 5.4-5.

44. See Piska 15.22, and Meq, 2, 267.

45. *Paru'a*, "uncovered," is a figurative expression for *şaru'a*, "a leper" (see Num. Rabbah 7:1); and so it is implied that directly after worshipping the golden calf the people became leprous.

Levi; how then can one maintain [that all the Fathers of the Tribes were addressed as faultless]?"—You must assume, therefore, as R. Eleazar⁴⁶ taught, that even though Jacob [at first] blessed the Tribes that were born later and chided the ones that were born earlier, he subsequently retracted his chidings, and blessed [everyone of them], as evident from the verse [which comes after Jacob's blessing, namely], *All these are Tribes of Israel—all twelve of them* (Gen. 49:28). For how shall the conclusion of that verse, *And this is it that their father spoke unto them, then blessed them; every one according to his blessing he blessed them*, be construed, except, as R. Eleazar went on to say, that Jacob made it possible for every one of the Fathers of the Tribes to draw sustenance from the blessings he bestowed upon every one of the others.⁴⁷

For this very reason,⁴⁸ so said R. Huna and R. Levi, [the three Tribes born earlier] are enumerated separately in the Book of Exodus, and their genealogy set down alongside that of Moses and Aaron: *These are the heads of their fathers' houses: the sons of Reuben*, etc., *And the sons of Simeon*, etc., *and . . . the sons of Levi* (Exod. 6:14, 15, 16). So taught R. Huna and R. Levi, explaining why Scripture enumerates the three Tribes. But they did not explain why Scripture also sets down the genealogy of the three Tribes born earlier alongside that of Moses and Aaron. So if you are saying with R. Huna and R. Levi that because their father at one time had chided them, Scripture deemed it proper to enumerate separately the three Tribes that were born earlier, that's all well and good. But we must still ask why Scripture deemed it necessary to put the three of them next to Moses and Aaron—*And the Lord spoke*

46. So Parma MS; PE: "Eliczer."

47. Literally "made them suck one from the other." The verse should have concluded "according to his blessing he blessed him." The use of the plural, *blessed THEM*, is taken by the commentator to indicate that each father of a Tribe was given a share in the blessing bestowed by Jacob upon all the other Fathers of Tribes. See Tanhuma, *Wayēhi*, 16.

48. To indicate that Jacob had retracted his chidings and bestowed blessings upon Reuben, Simeon, and Levi.

unto Moses and unto Aaron, and gave them a charge . . . These are the sons of Reuben, etc., of Simeon . . . of Levi (Exod. 6:13-14)? Because the three Tribes that were born earlier submitted to the reproof of their father, they won the privilege—as R. Judah⁴⁹ the son of R. Simon, citing R. Samuel the son of R. Isaac, used to say—of having their genealogy set down in Scripture alongside that of Moses and Aaron, to fulfill *The ear that hearkeneth to the reproof of life abideth alongside the wise* (Prov. 15:31).

Another comment: *Thou art all fair, My love*. Come, behold how beloved all the Tribes were in the sight of the Holy One, blessed be He! Indeed, from the way Scripture refers to the offerings which the princes presented, you may infer how all the Tribes, beloved of God, were treated alike. Thus Judah offered first, yet the text, in referring to the offering which he presented, says *AND his offering*, while after that, [with reference to the offerings presented by the other Tribes], the text unexpectedly says *his offering*; for of him who offered first, the text should have said *his offering*, while of the others who presented their offerings on subsequent days, the text should have said *AND his offering*. Why then does the text not read as one would expect it to read? R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest explained: Because if Judah should ever take to saying proudly, “I am he who offered first,” it will be said to him, “Thou art the one whose offering is referred to as though it were the very last.” Similarly, at the end [of the account of the offerings by the princes] you find *This was the dedication offering of the altar, in the day when it was anointed*, etc. (Num. 7:84); take note: not “after it was anointed,” but *in the day that it was anointed*, as if all the princes had presented their offerings in a single day. Why should such a thing be said unless to imply thereby [that all the Tribes were alike]: *Thou art ALL fair, My love; and there is no spot in thee* (Song 4:7).

Another comment: It was because Jeremiah said, *Refuse silver shall men call them* (Jer. 6:30), and because in the verse

49. “Judah”—Parma MS.

The house of Israel is become dross unto Me (Ezek. 22:18) Ezekiel called the people of Israel "dross," that Zechariah came and asserted, *Behold a candlestick* ALL *of gold* (Zech. 4:2)—all Israel is of gold. Why did he say this? [Because God Himself said to Israel]: *Thou art* ALL *fair, My love; and there is no spot in thee.*

PISKA 8

SUMMARY

The light of the Hanukkah lamp

The statement that it is permitted to kindle one Hanukkah lamp from another Hanukkah lamp leads to the theme of the kindling of lamps in the Temple when Jerusalem will have been rebuilt (Sec. 1).

The word "lamp" is interpreted as man's soul which reports to God all that man does, and, in the plural, as the lamps wherewith God will search Jerusalem to uncover idolatry. The word "search" is then read as "freeing," and it is shown that the freeing of Israel is guaranteed in the laws of the Torah (Secs. 2-3). God's lamps, for whose sake Israel will be freed, are construed successively as the holy congregation of Israel, seven specific commandments in the Torah, and the seventy elders in the highest council of the Land of Israel (Sec. 4).

Lamp and *light* (Ps. 119:105) are further construed as referring to the Urim and Thummim. David, unlike Saul, made reverent use of these, indicating the extraordinary piety that was to win the kingship for him, even as it was to save him from many dangers (Secs. 5-6).

*And it shall come to pass at that time that
I will search Jerusalem with lamps (Zeph. 1:12).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: Is a man permitted to kindle from a Hanukkah lamp a lamp which is to be used for a secular purpose? In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim, as R. Aḥa stated it in the name of Rab, our Masters taught as follows: From a Hanukkah lamp it is forbidden to kindle a lamp which will be used for a secular purpose; but to kindle one

1. Friedmann suggests that Zeph. 1 may have been the haftarah for the Sabbath which falls regularly during the eight days of Hanukkah.

Hanukkah lamp from another Hanukkah lamp is permitted.

From what usage is the inference drawn that it is permitted to kindle one Hanukkah lamp from another? From a usage—so taught R. Jacob ben Abba in the name of R. Aḥa²—sanctioned in the tending of the lampstand in the Temple where the Holy of Holies was, for our Masters [of the Mishnah] taught as follows: "Whenever the priest found that the lampstand's two easternmost lamps had gone out, he would clear away their ash, then rekindle them from the lamps which were still burning" (Tam 3:9). Now if, when one of the lamps upon the lampstand in the innermost part of the Temple was found extinguished, usage permitted rekindling that lamp from a companion, all the more it follows that it is permitted to kindle one Hanukkah lamp from another Hanukkah lamp.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Even as lamps used to be kindled in My holy House³ in this world,⁴ so once again shall I have them kindled when I rebuild Jerusalem [in the days of the Messiah]. And the proof? The verse in the lesson from the Prophets which quotes God as saying, *When I free⁵ Jerusalem, [it shall be] with lamps.*

2. <And it shall come to pass at that time, etc.> R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse by quoting *The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts* (Prov. 20: 27), and then citing R. Aḥa's comment: As to kings of flesh-and-blood come agents who inform each king of each and every matter, so, likewise, to the Holy One, blessed be He, come agents who report each and every matter that a man does, whether in secret, or in the dark, or at night.⁶ And this is the way the agents of the Holy One, blessed be He, report: the

2. "in the name of R. Aḥa"—Parma MS.

3. "in My holy House"—so Parma MS, which is correct, since no lights were kindled in the Holy of Holies. PE: "in the House of the Holy of Holies."

4. In the days of the First Temple and in the days of the Second Temple.

5. Reading not "search" (*ḥps*) but "free," as though the Hebrew read *ḥps*. See Piska 8.3.

6. "or at night"—Parma MS; PE: "openly."

soul reports to the angel, the angel to the cherub, and the cherub to the Holy One, blessed be He. And the proof from Scripture? A verse in which Solomon implies this very thing: *A bird of the air⁷ shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings⁷ shall tell the matter* (Eccles. 10:20). Moreover, records regarding every thing which men do are put in writing before the Holy One, blessed be He, so that in the time-to-come, when the Lord reproves each and every man for his deeds, men will stand in astonishment [at God's precise knowledge. The origin of such knowledge should be clear to them] from the following parable: One who was wedded to the king's daughter used to rise every day early in the morning and salute the king, and the king would say to him: "Thus and so you did in your house. At such and such a time you were angry. At such a time you struck your servants," and so on, concerning every single act. The man would then go forth and say to the people of the palace: "Who told [the king] that I have done thus? How does he know?" Thereupon they would reply: "Fool, you are wedded to his daughter, and you ask, 'Whence does he know?'" His daughter tells him."

So, though man does whatever he wants, his soul tells the Holy One, blessed be He, every single thing. Then, when the Holy One, blessed be He, passes sentence upon a man, saying to him: "Thus and such hast thou done," and the man, astonished, asks, "Who reported to God that I did all these things?," he should be told and told again: You are the biggest fool in the world! You are married to His daughter—that is to say, His spirit is in you, as is said *The Lord God . . . breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life* (Gen. 2:7)—and you ask, How does He know? Whatever you think in your heart, the soul within you tells Him every single thing: *The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts*: it searches out whatever is hidden in the [heart's] secret chambers and reports to the Holy One, blessed be He. As David said: *I call to remembrance my song in the night, which I commune to mine*

7. These are taken to be angelic creatures. Cf. Maimonides, *Guide*, 2.6.

own heart: thereupon my spirit makes diligent search (Ps. 77: 7): Whatever I communicate to my heart, my spirit makes diligent search and reports⁸ to the Holy One, blessed be He. And my spirit is able to make such diligent search because "The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inward parts."

All the above, [R. Tanhuma concluded], is implied in the words, *And it shall come to pass at that time that I will search Jerusalem with lamps.*

3. Another comment: *And it shall come to pass at that time*, etc. The search will be made with lamps⁹—not by the light of the moon, nor by the light of the sun. We know that at Passover the search for leaven which must be removed is not made by the light of the moon, nor by the light of the sun: because of Passover's coming lamps are lighted to search out the leaven. The Holy One, blessed be He, will do likewise; using only lamps, He will search Jerusalem to remove idolatry from it and to root out the Impulse to evil. Hence it is said *I will search Jerusalem with lamps.*

Israel asked: Master of the universe, when wilt Thou do this? He replied: After I have first done what is written of in the preceding verse: *And in that day, saith the Lord, Hark!* etc. (Zeph. 1:10-11). *Hark! a cry from the fish gate*, namely, from [the shore city of] Acco,¹⁰ set in the very midst of fish; *and a wailing from the second*, namely, from Lydda,¹¹ second in importance only to Jerusalem; *and a great crashing from the hills*, that is, from Sepphoris, set on hills; *Wail, ye inhabitants of the Mortar*,¹² that is, of Tiberias, set in a mortar-shaped depression.¹³

8. "makes diligent search and reports"—so Parma MS; PE: "and reports to make the matter known."

9. That is, the search will be close.

10. See Judg. 1:31, and Exod. Rabbah 9:6.

11. See Piska 13.6, and JE, *s.v.*

12. EV, *Maḳtesh*, which means "mortar" or "depression."

13. According to Simon Dubnow, these references to the punishment to be inflicted on Acco, Lydda, and Tiberias allude to the revolt against Constantius II which the Jews in Galilee started in 351-52 C.E. In its wake, so Jerome states,

And the Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say: After I shall have executed judgment in those four places for that which idolaters wrought in them, then *I will search Jerusalem with lamps*.¹⁴

Another comment: In keeping with R. Aḥa's suggestion that here the word 'hpš should be pronounced as if spelled not with a samek but with a šin, the words are rendered *And it shall come to pass at that time that I will free ('hpš)*. Accordingly, 'hpš *Jerusalem* means that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I shall let her go free ('hpš), in keeping with the ordinance which I caused to be written in the Torah: *And if a man smite the eye of his bondman, or the eye of his bondwoman, and destroy it, he shall let him go free (hfšy)*¹⁵ (Exod. 21:26). Since I have smitten both eyes of My children, as is said *For the Lord hath poured out upon them the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed their*¹⁶ *eyes* (Isa. 29:10), is it not right therefore that they go forth into freedom? Hence, in *I will free ('hpš) Jerusalem*,¹⁷ Scripture [also quotes God as saying], I shall let her go free because of what I caused to be written in the Torah: *If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free (hfšy)* (Exod. 21:2). As for the word *six*, it refers to Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Media, Greece, Edom—six in all—after whose downfall the prediction *And in the seventh he shall go out free* will come to pass. Hence *I will free ('hpš) Jerusalem*.¹⁸

Gallus, Constantius' co-emperor and general, destroyed Sepphoris, Tiberias, and Lydda. And, says the commentator, God will wreak vengeance for the Jews murdered by the heathen who occupied these cities. See Simon Dubnow, *Dibre yēme 'am 'olam* (Tel-Aviv, 5700/1940), 2d ed., 3, 121; and Samuel Klein, *Tolēdot hay-yiśšub hay-yēhuḏi bē-Ereṣ Yiśra'el* (Tel-Aviv, 5695/1935), p. 20.

14. Against the idolaters in Jerusalem God will thus proceed in keeping with the time-honored strategy of military invaders who, when attacking Palestine, invade Jerusalem last.

15. In Hebrew the sounds "p" and "f" are represented by the same letter.

16. MT: *upon you and your eyes*.

17. The verse would then read: *I will free Jerusalem because of the lamps*, that is because of what God did to the eyes of Israel.

18. The passage beginning with "I shall let her go free," and ending with *I will free ('hpš) Jerusalem* is found in Parma MS but not in PE. PE: "R

4. Another comment: *I will free Jerusalem*. Israel said to Him: Master of the Universe, is this to be all of our preferment, [namely, Thy declaration] *I will free Jerusalem for the sake of lamps*? And what of the promise Thou hast given us through the Prophets: *The sun shall be no more thy light by day . . . But the Lord shall be unto thee thy light by day*¹⁹ (Isa. 60:19); or, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee* (Isa. 60:1)? Is *I will free Jerusalem for the sake of lamps* all that Thou canst now say to us?

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: These are not [ordinary lamps] as²⁰ you appear to think. You are to regard them as the kind of lamp I showed Zechariah, the lamp referred to in the verse *Behold, a lampstand all of gold* (Zech. 4:2), by which the congregation of Israel, elsewhere addressed "Thou art all fair, My love,"²¹ is meant (Song 4:7).²² God was referring here to the kind of lamp He showed to Moses when He said: "And thou shalt make a lampstand of pure gold"—meaning the congregation of Israel—"of beaten work shall the lampstand be made, even its base, and its shaft; its cups, its knops, and its flowers." Now why should all the parts of the lampstand be specified unless to imply that the base of the lampstand is the patriarch of Israel; the shaft, the president of the court; the cups, the Sages; the knops, the disciples; and the flowers, young children who study at school, all these being "of one piece with it" (Exod. 25:31)? Hence, "Thou art all fair, My

Berechiah the Priest Berabbi said: *'hpi Jerusalem* means 'I shall let her go free,' because of what I caused to be written in the Torah: *If thou buy a Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve; and in the seventh he shall go out free (h'f'y)* (Exod. 21:2). Hence *I will free ('hpi) Jerusalem*."

19. MT: *But the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light*.

20. Parma MS and SPR read not *lmh*, "as to what," but *l'mh*, "not what" or "not as." Parma MS omits the two words, *lkā*, "it will not be so," which follow.

21. On the allegorical interpretation of Song of Songs see Piskas 5.4, and 7.7.

22. In keeping with Parma MS, I transpose the passage in PE, beginning "*I have seen . . . a lampstand*" and ending "*I had Myself sent to Babylon*," to follow immediately after "*'shall be of one piece with it'*—that is '*Thou art all fair, My love*.'"

love." [Now to return to the exposition of the verse in Zechariah]: *I have seen . . . a lampstand all of gold, and on the head of it Him who banishes Himself*²³ (Zech. 4:2), that is, God, who on one occasion said, "For your sake I had Myself sent²⁴ to Babylon" (Isa. 43:14). Or the expression in Zechariah may be read *on the head of it her Redeemer*,²⁵ in the sense of the verse which, describing the redemption of Israel, says, "Their king shall pass before them, and the Lord on the head of them" (Micah 2:13). *And its lamps [in every] seven, over it*²⁶ (Zech. 4:2)—keeping watch over Israel is the Sabbath which Israel observe one day in every seven. We know that the Sabbath is here referred to, for in going on to say, *there are seven pillars, yea, seven, to the lamps* (*ibid.*), the phrase *seven pillars* has reference to the seven days of creation, as evident from the use of the term "pillars" in the verse "Wisdom . . . hath hewn out her pillars in seven [days]" (Prov. 9:1). And the words which follow *yea, seven*, have reference to the seven Patriarchs—Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob;²⁷ Kohath, Amram, Moses, and Aaron. Or, *And its lamps, seven, over it* refer to seven specific commandments set down in the Torah: commandments concerning offerings to the priests, tithes for the Levites and tithes for the poor, Sabbatical years, Jubilee years, circumcision, filial respect, and the study of Torah which leads to obedience to all of these.²⁸

Note that one number is mentioned three times: *its lamps*

23. JV: *with a bowl upon the top of it*. AV, margin, *with her bowl*, etc. But in this comment *gullah*, "bowl," is read as though spelled *goleh*, "He who emigrates," or perhaps *golah*, "her emigrating One." The possibility for the comment is suggested by the puzzling presence of a *mappik* in the *he* of *gullah*.

24. By a slight change in vowels, *šillahti*, "I sent," may be read *šullahti*, "I had Myself sent." See Sif Num. 161.

25. *Gullah*, "bowl," is now read as though spelled *go'ulah*, "her redeemer."

26. JV: *and its seven lamps thereon*.

27. At this point in Parma MS, Levi is mentioned; the name of Aaron does not occur.

28. [Literally "which is of equal weight to all of these." L. N.] Cf. Pe'ah 1. In n. 26 Friedmann remarks that the first four of these commandments are those whereon the existence of Israel in its own Land depends; and the last three are those whereon the existence of Israel outside the Land depends.

seven, over it; seven pillars, yea, seven—a total of twenty-one. Then the seven pillars, spoken of in connection with each one of the seven lamps, make an additional forty-nine,²⁹ so that, with the twenty-one [just mentioned], the total comes to seventy, which was the number of elders [in the highest council of the Land].

And two olive-trees by it (Zech. 4:3). The phrase alludes to the two men anointed with olive oil, the priest who was anointed in a time of war [to exhort the armies of Israel];³⁰ and the king who was anointed to rule over Israel.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: In order that My declaration through Zephaniah shall not appear trivial to Israel, let them remember that I will free Jerusalem for the sake of these, [the Sabbath, the Patriarchs, the seven commandments, the seventy elders, the anointed priest, and the anointed king, every one of which gives forth light]: *And it shall come to pass at that time that I will free (hps̄) Jerusalem for the sake of the lamps.*

Another comment: *And it shall come to pass at that time that I will free Jerusalem for the sake of the lamps; and I will punish the men that are thickened on their lees* (Zeph. 1:12). These words are to be considered in reference to the verse *And it shall come to pass in that day, that light shall not be one of those rare things,*³¹ *nor shall there be any longer thickening on lees* (Zech. 14:6).³² What sort of day will it be? *The one day which shall be known as the Lord's, not day, and not night* (Zech. 14:7)—*not day* for the wicked, [for them who thicken on their lees, that is, prosper in their evil ways]; *and not night*

29. A number which may intimate—so Professor Mordecai Margulies suggests—those subtle distinctions of the law that elaborate 49 arguments by which a thing may be proved clean and 49 other arguments by which it may be proved unclean. See Lev. Rabbah 26:2, and MTeh 7:7; and Piskas 14.6, and 21.6.

30. See Sot 8:1, and Deut. 20:2-3.

31. Cf. 1 Sam. 3:1.

32. JV: *And it shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light, but heavy clouds and thick*; AV: . . . *that the light shall not be clear, nor dark,*

for the righteous [who suffer]. What sort of day will it be? *The kind of day on which light will continue even though evening has come (ibid.)*: "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Ps. 27:1).

5. Another comment: *The Lord is my light and my salvation*. R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps. 119:105). One would have expected "Thy word is a lamp unto my eyes."³³ But the text does not read thus, saying instead *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet*. And why does it read thus? Because the wicked are like a man who walking in darkness comes to a stone and stumbles over it, or comes to a pit and falls into it. Of such men Scripture says, *The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble* (Prov. 4:19). But the righteous are like a man who walking with a lamp before him comes to a pit and turns away from it, that he fall not into it; comes to a stone and takes care that he stumble not over it. So David said: I was about to profane the Sabbath, but the Torah gave me light: *Ye shall keep the Sabbath therefore . . . everyone that profaneth it shall surely be put to death* (Exod. 31:14). I was about to commit adultery, but the Torah gave me light: *And keep ye My statutes . . . both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death* (Lev. 20:8, 10). Hence the Torah is ever a lamp for my guidance: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light, etc.*

Another comment: If lamp, why light? And if light, why lamp? David said: When I begin in matters of Torah, I begin them in a small way; but as I enter further, many gates open for my enlightenment. Hence the text first speaks of a lamp and then of a light: *A lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path*.

Another comment: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path* (Ps. 119:105). When did David compose

33. "my eyes"—FT; P: "my feet."

this verse? At the time [when he went twice during a certain war into battle] in the Valley of Rephaim,³⁴ though, to be sure, he had never before set forth to any war without first inquiring of "the Lights," the Urim and the Thummim, as to his conduct.³⁵

Previously, when Samuel went to anoint David, the ministering angels, making accusation before the Holy One, blessed be He, had said to Him: Why art Thou taking the kingship [from Saul] and giving it to David? The Holy One, blessed be He, had replied: I shall tell you why—because Saul and David differ. When Saul stood to make inquiry of the Urim and Thummim, and the Philistines came upon him, he left in the act of making inquiries of the Urim and Thummim and fled without delay. During that time, the one time that he stood inquiring of the Urim and Thummim, the Philistines came upon him, and so he said to the priest [through whom he was inquiring]: "Withdraw thy hand," as is written *And it came to pass, while Saul talked unto the priest, that the tumult that was in the camp of the Philistines went on and increased; and Saul said unto the priest: "Withdraw thy hand"* (1 Sam. 14:19). Saul would not wait until the priest finished. David, on the other hand, even with the Philistines upon him, at the time of his stationing his army in the Valley of Rephaim, will begin to inquire of God as to his conduct.³⁶ The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to him: Thou shalt not make a direct attack. I shall go about to the rear of the Philistines, but thou hast no permission to stretch out a hand against them, even if they come near thee, until thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees. Thus it is written, *The Philistines came*

34. In the course of the war the Philistines spread out twice in the Valley of Rephaim (see 2 Sam. 5:18, 22); and before each battle, before he made any kind of move, David made inquiry of God. So Friedmann (n. 37) explains the matter.

35. See PH, p. 342.

36. In God's account to the ministering angels of David in the battle of Rephaim, He is speaking of future events.

*up yet again, and encamped*³⁷ *in the Valley of Rephaim. And when David inquired of the Lord, He said: . . . "Come upon them over against the mulberry trees. But . . . when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees"* (2 Sam. 5:22-24). Now why should God say to David that the sign of His going out to help him would be noted by David not as the sound of His going behind the Philistines, but as the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees? Because, as R. Berechiah Berabbi explained [God Himself would be going out from among the prickly tops of the mulberry trees, the kind that are] completely covered from the top down with thorns.³⁸ Thus the verse means to teach indirectly that whenever you, the children of Israel, are in trouble, I am in it with you: "He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him; I am with him in trouble" (Ps. 91:15).

But let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that then thou shalt determine [to go up] (2 Sam. 5:24). The expression *thou shalt determine* usually denotes decision, as in the phrase "seeing his days are determined" (Job 14:5).

As David goes forth, the Philistines will be coming nearer and nearer, and Israel will stand looking right at them, they being no further away than four cubits. Israel will ask: "David, why are we standing still?" And he will reply: I am commanded by God not even to stretch forth a hand³⁹ until I hear the sound of a going in the tops of the trees. And he will go on to say: If we stretch forth a hand against them, we die; and if we do not stretch forth a hand against them, we die. It is better for us that we die the death of the obedient, and that we die not the death of the disobedient. And he will go on to say: I and you, let us lift up our eyes to the Holy One, blessed be

37. MT: *and spread themselves*.

38. The parallel for this passage in MTch 27:2 has here the words: "so that whenever a man touches the tree he cries out in sudden pain."

39. "a hand"—Parma MS.

He. As soon as they lift their eyes, there will be at once the sound of a going in the trees, and at once they will stretch forth their hands, as is said *And David did* ⁴⁰ *as the Lord commanded him* (2 Sam. 5:25).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the ministering angels: Now you know the difference between David and Saul! What will cause David—David and Israel—to be saved? The Divine Word which gives them light: *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet*.

6. Another comment: *The Lord is my light and my salvation*. What did David have in mind when he composed this Psalm? R. Eleazar ben Pēdaṭ said: The war against Egypt [at the exodus].⁴¹ R. Samuel bar Naḥman said: The war against Goliath.⁴² And our Masters said: <New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement.>⁴³ But R. Joshua ben Levi said: David had in mind the troop of Amalek, as is written *And it came to pass, when David and his men were come to Ziklag on the third day, that the Amalekites had made a raid . . . and had taken captive . . . all that were therein* (1 Sam. 30:1, 2). *And when David and his men came to Ziklag . . . David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept*, etc. *David's two wives were taken captives . . . And David was greatly distressed. And David said to Abiathar . . . "Bring me hither the ephod"*⁴⁴ (1 Sam. 30:3, 4, 5, 7). *And David inquired of the Lord: "Shall I pursue after this troop?"* (1 Sam. 30:8). *And they found an Egyptian*, etc. (1 Sam. 30:11). *And when [the Egyptian] had brought [David] down [to the Amalekite troop], behold, they were spread over all the ground* (1 Sam. 30:16). *And David smote them from dawn until the evening, into their morrow* (1 Sam. 30:17). The text does not say "into morrow" but

40. MT: *did so*.

41. See Lev. Rabbah 21:1, and 27:3.

42. See Lev. Rabbah 21:2, and 1 Sam. 17:48.

43. See Lev. Rabbah 21:4, and 27:4. In the lacuna in P, Parma MS reads: "Our Masters said: The dividing of the Red Sea."

44. "And when David . . . hither the ephod"—Parma Ms.

into their morrow. What does the expression *into their morrow* intimate? ⁴⁵ That David smote the Amalekites three days. And the proof? ⁴⁶ The text says, *David smote them from dawn until the evening*—that is, one day. Then it goes on to say *into their morrow*, the plural *their* signifying the morrows of two more days. Hence David, [besides smiting the Amalekites *from dawn until the evening of the first day*], smote them for two days more.⁴⁷

[*A Psalm*] of David. *The Lord is my light and my salvation*, etc. *The Lord is my light*. [Elsewhere concerning Amalek, David said]: "For Thou dost light my lamp; the Lord my God doth lighten my darkness. For by Thee I overrun a troop" (Ps. 18:29-30). *And my salvation*. In the same connection he also said: "My shield, and my horn of salvation" (Ps. 18:3). *Whom shall I fear* (Ps. 27:1)—"for by Thee I overrun a troop"—*when evildoers came upon me to eat up my flesh* (Ps. 27:2). The words *my flesh*, as in the verse "A man . . . shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh" (Gen. 2:24), refer to his wives whom he rescued.

Israel said to God: Master of the universe, whatever war may befall us, we shall have no fear of it. Why not? Because we have confidence in Thee that Thou wilt rescue us, as is said *Though a host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise up against me, even then will I be confident* (Ps. 27:3).

45. "What does the expression *into their morrow* intimate?"—Parma MS.

46. "And the proof?"—Parma MS; PE: "as is said."

47. Hyperbole in describing the prowess of heroes like David is not uncommon in aggadic literature (cf. MhG Gen., p. 25). David, unlike Saul, pursued the proscribed Amalekites for three days; then he gave thanks to God, his light and help.

PISKA 9

SUMMARY

David's awe of God, and God as Israel's Leader

Sundry requirements in regard to the goblet used during the blessing which precedes Grace after Meals are intended to make certain that the commandment of Grace after Meals is performed in awe of God. David is singled out as one who obeyed commandments in just such awe, obeyed them so scrupulously that there was not a single part of the body with which he did not praise God. He said, *All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like unto Thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him?* (Ps. 35:10), the term *poor* being successively construed by the commentators as referring to Israel as opposed to the nations, to David as opposed to Saul, and finally to the good Impulse as opposed to the evil one. Because of David's scrupulous obedience to commandments, he was told by God that his praise of Him in the Psalms was more comely than the praise of the other nine men who composed the Psalter, and that the lead (Ps. 61:1) in song was his (Secs. 1-2).

The meaning of the word *leader* (*ibid.*) as referring not to man but to God is explored. It is God who leads in song; as *Leader* He is "the Victorious One"; or as *Leader* it is "He who gives victory to His children"—that is, He wishes them to be victorious over Him in order to be spared the ordeal of having to destroy His own handiwork (Sec. 3).

To God, then, as Israel's Leader, David's *Hear my cry* (Ps. 61:2) is a prayer for all times, even for the days when the children of Israel are in exile (Sec. 4).

For the leader; with string music.
[*A Psalm*] of David. *Hear my cry, O God;*
attend unto my prayer. From the end of

*the earth will I call unto Thee, as [in
awe of Thee] the naked flesh over my heart
is covered*¹ (Ps. 61:1-3).²

1. Let our master instruct us: Is it permitted to say the blessing [which precedes Grace after Meals] over a goblet which has not been washed clean? R. Aḥa, citing R. Johanan, said: If the precept is to be properly observed, the goblet for such a blessing must be washed clean, must be wreathed [with cups for distributing the wine],³ and must be full. And the proof? *And to Naphtali he said: Abundant, giving delight, and full, then the blessing of the Lord*⁴ (Deut. 33:23). *Abundant*—the goblet is to be wreathed [with cups for distributing the wine]; *giving delight*—the goblet is to be washed clean; *and full*. Only after these requirements are met may the blessing be said.⁵ Thus three qualities of bounty are required for the goblet over which the blessing [preceding Grace after Meals] is to be said.

Further, in the name of R. Johanan: It is also required that the eyes of the man saying the blessing be upon the goblet, that the goblet be in his right hand, that his hand be a handbreadth above the table, and that he say the blessing not lightly, but in awe of God. Then, too, R. Abba said in the name of R. Ḥiyya, and R. Ḥiyya said it in the name of R. Johanan: If a man eats standing, he must sit down as he says the blessing; if he eats sitting, he must recline as he says the blessing; if he

1. JV: *when my heart fainteth*. But the verb 'fj may mean either "faint" or "cover."

2. Friedmann suggests that Ps. 61 may have been read during worship in the synagogue on the last day of Hanukkah.

3. See P.Ber 7, end, 11d, and *Pēne Mošeh*; B.Ber 51a, and Rashi. However, Levy, following Frankel, suggests that it meant wreathing or decorating the goblet with flowers—a Greek custom which was unknown in Babylonia. See Levy, *Wörterbuch*, 3, 637. Levy's view is shared by Jastrow, Goldschmidt, and Ben-Yehudah.

4. JV: *And of Naphtali he said: O Naphtali, satisfied with favor, and full with the blessing of the Lord*.

5. "*Abundant*—the goblet . . . the blessing be said"—Parma MS.

eats⁶ reclining, he must make sure he is decently covered⁷ as he says the blessing. What is meant by "decently covered"? Even if his arm be uncovered, he must cover it, and then he may say the blessing. [All of this care] in order that the commandment be performed in awe of God.

You can point to no one who was as mindful of the commandments and as God-fearing as David, for as he himself said: *I am a companion of all them that fear Thee* (Ps. 119:63). You can see this for yourself, for though our Masters of the Mishnah taught that he who comes from a journey is exempt from the statutory prayer (*Tēfillah*),⁸ and is also exempt if the place he is in during the journey is dangerous,⁹ David did not exempt himself. Indeed, wherever he went, he did not withhold himself from prayer for any time at all.¹⁰ And the proof? The passage [prescribed for the day]: *For the leader; with string music. [A Psalm] of David. Hear my cry, O God . . . From the end of the earth will I call unto Thee*¹¹ (Ps. 61:1-3).

2. *For the leader; with string music. [A Psalm] of David. Hear my cry, O God.* R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: *My lips shall greatly rejoice when I sing praises unto Thee; and my soul which Thou hast redeemed* (Ps. 71:23). You find that there is not a single part of the body with which David did not praise the Holy One, blessed be He! He praised Him with his head and with all the parts of his body together;¹² but he also went back and praised Him with each part separately. David praised God with his head: *Thou hast anointed my head*

6. "eats"—Parma MS.

7. Since parts of his body might have been uncovered as he was reclining.

8. See Hertz, *APB*, pp. 130-56.

9. Cf. Ber 4:4.

10. "for any time at all"—Parma MS.

11. Accordingly, the commentator concludes, a man must be decently covered while praying; and whatever difficulties he may encounter he must still pray regularly.

12. I follow the emendation in MC. As it stands, the text, according to Friedmann's n. 9, might be made to read: "There is the principal praise where all [the parts of the body] speak together as one, praise such as *All my bones shall say: Lord, who is like unto Thee?*" (Ps. 35:10).

with oil¹³ (Ps. 23:5). He praised Him with his eyes: *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord* (Ps. 25:15), *Unto Thee I lift up mine eyes* (Ps. 123:1). He praised Him with his mouth: *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord* (Ps. 145:21). He praised Him with his tongue: *And my tongue shall speak of Thy righteousness* (Ps. 35:28). He praised Him with his lips: *My lips shall greatly rejoice* (Ps. 71:23). He praised Him with his throat: *I am weary with my crying; my throat is dried* (Ps. 69:4). He praised Him with his heart: *My heart and my flesh sing for joy unto the living God* (Ps. 84:3). He praised Him with his innards: *And all that is within me, bless His holy name* (Ps. 103:1). He praised Him with his hands: *Blessed be the Lord . . . who traineth my hands for war* (Ps. 144:1). He praised Him with his feet: *My foot standeth in an even place; in the congregations will I bless the Lord* (Ps. 26:12). And finally: *All my bones shall say: "Lord, who is like unto Thee?"* (Ps. 35:10).¹⁴ David said: Though I praised Him with all these, even now I know not how to praise Him sufficiently, as is written, *My mouth shall tell of Thy righteousness . . . all the day; for I know not the numbers thereof* (Ps. 71:15).

All my bones shall say: "Lord, who is like unto Thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him?" (Ps. 35:10). The *poor* is Israel, subject to the strength of the [heathen] nations of the earth, Israel whom the Holy One, blessed be He, will deliver. That here the term *poor* refers to Israel, is indicated by the verse *And I will leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall take refuge in the name of the Lord* (Zeph. 3:12). David said: One sheep among seventy wolves, what can it do? Israel among seventy strong nations, what can Israel do, unless Thou standest by them every single hour? Hence, *Who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him*—that is, deliverest Israel.

13. The words which follow, *my cup runneth over*, are apparently taken to intimate a cup of joyous deliverance, over which a blessing is to be pronounced. See MTeh 75:4.

14. MTeh 35:2.

Another comment: The words read *Who deliverest the persecuted from him that is too strong for him* (Ps. 35:10) refer, as R. Aḥa stated, to the deliverance of David from Saul;¹⁵ and the words which follow, *the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him*, refer to the deliverance of the good man from the evil Impulse. Can there be any greater despoiler? How greatly the evil Impulse labors that a man should not do a good deed! And how often does the evil Impulse succeed in offsetting a good deed! Can there be a greater despoiler?¹⁶ Hence the words *Who deliverest . . . the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him* mean "deliverest the good man from the evil Impulse."

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "David, ten men¹⁷ composed this Book [of Psalms] in praise of Me, but the praise of all of them together is not as comely [as thine]." And David replied: "Since Thou takest my praise of Thee to be most comely, I shall give Thee praise." [Hence the superscription of this Psalm of David reads]: *For the leader who is above, neginah*¹⁸ [*the song of praise*] (Ps. 61:1). What is meant by *For the leader who is above*, etc.? That in comeliness David's song of praise [was above the songs of all the others].

[Another comment]: Who is meant by [*the leader*? God], the lead in song being His,¹⁹ for it is He who puts praise in the

15. "The words read *who deliverest the persecuted . . . of David from Saul*."—Parma MS.

16. "How greatly the evil Impulse . . . a greater despoiler?"—Parma MS; PE: "How much the good Impulse toiled until it found [the opportunity for a good deed]! And in no time at all the evil Impulse comes and deprives it of its good deed. There is no greater despoiler." Cf. MTeh 34:2.

17. The ten were: Adam, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, David, Solomon, Asaph, and the three sons of Korah. See MTeh 1:6.

18. AV: *upon neginah*. It is to be noted that only here is the preposition 'l used, which AV renders *upon*, and I render *above*. Everywhere else the prefix *b* is used, which AV translates "on." In JV no distinction is made, the entire phrase being invariably rendered *with string music*.

19. In the passage "The Holy One, blessed be He, said: David, ten men . . . the lead in song being His," I follow Parma MS. PE: "The Holy One, blessed be He, said: David, ten men composed the Book [of Psalms], inserting their praise of Me into it, but despite all the others, the Book is ascribed to thee (see

mouths of the righteous so that they are led to praise Him. Hence the phrase *To the Leader upon neginah*. In Rab's words, "We give thanks unto Thee . . . for that we are led to give Thee thanks."²⁰

3. In another comment, the expression *lmnšh*, [previously rendered "lead in song"], is taken in its other sense of "victory," and is rendered "To Him to whom victory belongs."

In another comment, the expression *lmnšh*, again taken in the sense of "victory," is rendered "To Him who gives victory to His children."

In still another comment, the expression *lmnšh*, taken in the sense of "victory," is rendered "To Him who wishes to be conquered"—if one dare say such a thing of God.

lmnšh, in the sense of "victory," rendered "To Him to whom victory belongs," [is illustrated by the following verses]: *Thine, O Lord is . . . the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty* (1 Chron. 29:11); and also by the verse *The Lord is a man of war* (Exod. 15:3); and also by the verse *Then shall the Lord go forth and fight* (Zech. 14:3); and also by the verse *The Lord will go forth as a mighty man* (Isa. 42:13).²¹

lmnšh, in the sense of "victory," rendered "To Him who gives victory to His children": He waged the wars against the Amorites, as is written, *And it came to pass, as they fled from before Israel . . . the Lord cast down great stones from heaven upon them* (Josh. 10:11).

lmnšh, in the sense of "victory," is [as stated above], also rendered "To Him who wishes to be conquered." That God so wishes, is implied in the verse *For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always (nešah) wroth* (Isa. 57:16). Here *nešah* is read as though written *niššuah* ("victory"), so that in the

MTeh 1:6). David replied: 'Since praise is deemed suitable, I will continue praising Thee, as is said *To the Leader upon neginah*.' What is implied by saying *upon neginah*? That [God is upon the neginah], the lead in song being His."

20. These words are part of the eighteenth benediction in the *'Amidah*. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 151.

21. See Mek, 2, 32.

verse God is considered to be saying *I will not contend . . . for victory*.²² Why will He not contend for victory? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "When I am victorious, I lose, and when I am not victorious, I gain. I was victorious over the generation of the flood. Yet was I not the loser, for I destroyed My world, as is said *And He blotted out every living substance* (Gen. 7:23)? And so it was with the generation of the dispersion of the races of man and with the Sodomites.²³ But in the days of Moses, when I was not victorious, Mine was the gain, for I did not destroy Israel."²⁴ Hence, *lmnsh*: "To Him who wishes to be conquered."²⁵

4. Another comment: *For the leader; with string music . . . Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer* (Ps. 61:1-2). David said to Him: Master of the universe, until when shall Thy children remain in slavery, and Thou not hear my prayer? Is [the hearing of prayer] such a new thing for Thee? Long since in Egypt, did we not call Thee, and didst Thou not answer us? As is said *And the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried* (Exod. 2:23); and, as Scripture goes on to say, *I . . . have heard their cry* (Exod. 3:7). And so, too, [Thou didst answer] at the Red Sea. Even before they stood up to pray, God said to them: Why do you cry? I have already heard your prayer, as is written *And the Lord said unto Moses: "Wherefore criest thou unto Me?"* (Exod. 14:15). And so, too, [Thou didst answer in the days of] Amalek. They called the Lord, and He answered them at once, as is written *And Israel vowed a vow unto the Lord, and said "If Thou wilt indeed deliver this people²⁶ into my hand" . . . And the Lord hearkened to the voice of Israel* (Num. 21:2-3). And so, too, in the days of

22. The commentator suggests that the words *ever* and *always* should change places.

23. See Gen. 11 and 19. Parma MS goes on: "to whom you may apply the things said before."

24. See Exod. 32:14.

25. See Piska 40.4; and MTeh 4:6.

26. Rashi identifies *this people* with Amalek.

Samuel. When the Philistines came upon us, we called Thee, and Thou didst answer us, as is written *And Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel; and the Lord answered him* (1 Sam. 7:9). And so, too, in the days of Solomon. When he prayed before Thee, Thou didst answer him at once with fire, as is said *Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down* (2 Chron. 7:1).²⁷

David went on to say: Master of the universe, when Thy children were in the Temple, they used to call Thee and Thou didst answer them. Now that we are scattered in exile, do Thou answer us, as is said *From the end of the earth I call unto Thee* (Ps. 61:3). Master of the universe, rebuild Thy House, and cause us to dwell in it! *From the end of the earth I call unto Thee*. What follows in the Psalm? *Let me abide in Thy Tabernacle for ever* (Ps. 61:5).

27. See MTeh 61:1.

SUMMARY

The levy of the half-shekel for
offerings in the Tabernacle, and
God's exaltation of Israel

The modest and considerate levy of half a shekel ordained by God is contrasted with the inordinate and inconsiderate levies imposed by Rome. For, modest as it was, the half-shekel was a means of expiation for Israel, so that God would not diminish their numbers because of their taking a census (Sec. 1).

The command to take the sum of the children of Israel (Exod. 30:12) is presently to be examined in the light of Song 7:3. By way of introduction, in the first part of Song 7:3, *Thy navel is like a round goblet wherein no mingled wine is wanting*, the commentator takes the reference to Israel's navel to be a metaphor for the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin's sitting in the round, its sundry procedures, and in general its fruitful and important activities are taken to be intimated by the metaphor (Sec. 2).

The commentary continues with discussion of the latter half of the verse, *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*, etc. Israel is said to be like wheat because the circumcision at Israel's belly is like the split down the middle of a grain of wheat; because the world cannot get along without wheat; because Israel implicitly obey the precepts in Leviticus, the middle part of the Torah, symbolized in the Song of Songs by the term "belly" (Sec. 3); and because, unlike the heathen, who are "stubble," Israel, which is "wheat," is counted lovingly by God (Sec. 4).

The theme of God's counting the children of Israel is continued by means of a parable in which it is brought out that God counts Israel as His own treasure, particularly precious to Him because of the great expenditure they put Him to (Sec. 5).

In further comment, the Hebrew word for "count" is taken in its literal sense of "lift up," and is thus associated with Israel's ex-

altation at Sinai, where angels gave crowns and corselets of armor to each of the children of Israel. This exaltation was followed by Israel's degradation through the golden calf, when the same angels came down and removed the crowns and armor. But Israel was again exalted when God forgave them. In commanding Moses to lift His people, God thus had him perform a work which angels had previously performed. Moses' capacity to communicate with God was determined by the degree of Israel's virtue (Sec. 6).

The ambiguity of the phrase "lifting the head" (Exod. 30:12), which may mean removal of the head or elevation to greater dignity, is dealt with in a parable in which it is shown how close to destruction Israel was at the time of the golden calf (Sec. 7).

God's varying procedures, such as lifting the heads of some of the children of Israel and bringing low the heads of others, prove the fairness of His judgments (Sec. 8). Lifting their heads indicates His willingness to show mercy, unlike the angels who demand stern justice and betray a proneness to suggest severe punishment even when ostensibly pleading mercy for a mortal. Unlike the angels, Moses, God's angel of flesh-and-blood, showed himself at the time of the golden calf to be even more merciful than God in heaven (Sec. 9). It was at Moses' bidding that He *repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people* (Exod. 32:14), and thereby brought consternation to the heathen who had been gloating at the prospect of Israel's doom (Sec. 10). Finally, it is said that God is eager to have the children of Israel elevated and exalted because, as is illustrated through a series of parables, they were the first to acknowledge Him (Sec. 11).

In further comment, the phrase "lift the head" is construed as "bear the Head," "bear God," that is—God will be borne in the Tabernacle which the children of Israel are to build and carry through the wilderness.

The expiatory offerings in the Tabernacle were provided for by the levy of a half-shekel upon each man in Israel. In what ways is the half-shekel linked with expiation of Israel's sins? In the following ways: The half-shekel, which can be changed into six small coins, will remind the children of Israel that they worshiped the golden calf in the sixth hour of the day; the half-shekel, worth ten obols, will remind the children of Israel that they transgressed the Ten Commandments; the half-shekel, offered as though it were fire

in Israel's hand, will evoke dread of what they did and dread of sinning again (Sec. 12).

God's levy of the half-shekel is proof of His love for Israel. Even through their transgressions He brings them to great deeds. Thus, just as the sale of Joseph made it possible for the entire world to eat bread, so the transgression of worshipping the golden calf led to the doing of God's command, to the giving of the half-shekel (Sec. 13).

The matter of taking the sum of the children of Israel is resumed, and the ten occasions when Israel were counted are listed. It is shown incidentally that whenever, as in the days of David, the children of Israel were not counted by the divine command, a pestilence smote them (Sec. 14).

Finally, the significance of the half-shekel is again considered. It is taken to be "ransom for the soul." Israel, reasoning from certain Biblical precedents, at first thought that their ransom would be very heavy. But God told them that the ransom's amount did not matter to Him—what mattered was the spirit of contrition in which the ransom was given (Sec. 15).

*When thou takest the sum of
the children of Israel according to
their number (Exod. 30:12).¹*

1. Let our master instruct us: How many times a year was money withdrawn from the Treasury of the Temple? Our Masters of the Mishnah taught as follows: "Three times a year—before Passover, before Pentecost, and before Tabernacles²—money used to be withdrawn from the Treasury of the Temple" (Shek 3:1).> And what was done with the withdrawals from the Temple Treasury? The daily offerings were purchased with the money, money which came from all of Israel, from the shekels which they paid. And why [were the daily offerings

1. Exod. 30:11-16 is the additional lesson in the Pentateuch on Sabbath *Šekalim* (see Table of Scriptural Lessons, p. xiv). Between the Sabbath preceding the first day of Adar and the New Moon of Nisan, four Sabbaths have extraordinary lessons of the Law, which Moses is said to have instituted (Sof 21:4), assigned to them; these Sabbaths are known by the names of *Šekalim*, *Zaḥor*, *Parah*, and *ha-Hodeš*, respectively.

2. Fifteen days before the beginning of each of these festivals.

purchased with this money]? In order that all Israel might be partners in the rites of the Temple.³

In Adar—at the very beginning of Adar—they began announcing that the Temple tax was due,⁴ and at the beginning of Nisan the money was withdrawn from the Temple Treasury. And why did they begin announcing in Adar that the money was due, seeing that the money was to be withdrawn from the Temple Treasury in Nisan? ⁵ It was in order not to press Israel at the last minute, that the congregation of Israel was summoned to pay at the beginning of Adar.

According to Solomon, *The way of the wicked man*⁶ is as a hedge of thorns, etc. (Prov. 15:19), the verse as a whole, referring, as interpreted by R. Jacob ben Yoḥai,⁷ to God and to Esau. The words *The way of the wicked man* refer to the way of Esau. Wherein is his way as a hedge of thorns? Just as a thorn holds fast to a man's clothes, so that even though he disengage it from one side, it will stick to the other, so the kingdom of Esau annually appropriates Israel's⁸ crops and herds;⁹ even before such appropriation is made, pricks them with the poll tax; and even as this is being exacted, Esau's men come at the people of Israel for the levy of conscripts.¹⁰ But the Holy One, blessed be He, as the verse goes on to say, does not act thus: [*God's*]

3. See Sheḳ 4:1 and Friedmann's n. 5, in which, referring to Mēgillat Ta'ānit, chap. 1, he maintains that this procedure was introduced as a measure against the Sadducees, who contended that the daily offering could be purchased out of money provided by an individual. See also Piska 15.12.

4. See Sheḳ 1:1. Sof 21:4 reads as follows: "Why is the obligation of the shekel dues proclaimed on the first of Adar? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, knew that [in his plan for the thirtieth of Adar] Haman was to weigh out talents of silver against the Jews (Esther 3:9), and therefore, anticipating Haman's act, He told Moses that Israel's shekels should be paid to God in advance of Haman's payment."

5. "And why did they . . . Temple Treasury in Nisan"—Parma MS.

6. JV: *slothful*. Ibn Ezra notes that throughout Scripture the wicked is designated as "slothful." See MhG Gen., p. 27.

7. So Parma MS, P, and Margoloth gloss; PE: "Jose."

8. "Israel's"—Parma MS.

9. The *annona militaris* was an annual tax in kind by means of which the Roman government provisioned its armies. See Alon, *Tolēdot*, 2, 211.

10. For the meaning of *tyrbus* see Friedmann's n. 10, and Jastrow, p. 534a. PE: *tyrnws*; Parma MS: *tyrnym*.

*path for the upright*¹¹ is even (*ibid.*)—that is, graded evenly for Israel: On the first of Adar public announcement is made concerning the contributions to the Temple Treasury, and on the first of Nisan they are collected.¹² Hence, [God's] *path for the upright is even*.

And if you think Israel were taxed more than they could pay—they were not highly taxed, only half a shekel per man, which, according to R. Hanina, was the equivalent of half a *sela'*.¹³ And if you think this half-shekel was collected for the general needs of the Temple—no, it was collected solely as a means of expiation for Israel, the daily offering being purchased with such shekels.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: It is foreseen by Me that whenever a census of Israel is taken, their numbers will be diminished. And so this is what I shall do: I shall prepare a remedy for them, so that should a census of them be taken, they will have a means of expiation [and their numbers will not be diminished]. And what was their means of expiation? The giving of shekels [for the daily offering] was the means of expiation. Whence do we know this? From what was read in the lesson for the day: *When thou takest the sum*.

2. *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel*. R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: Consider these words in the light of what Solomon was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *Thy navel is like a round goblet wherein no mingled wine is wanting*, etc. (Song 7:3). To what institution in Israel did God allude when He said *thy navel*?¹⁴ To the great Sanhedrin established in Jerusalem, the one trying capital cases. And why His allusion to the Sanhedrin as a *navel*, as an umbilicus? Because the seat of the Sanhedrin was in Jerusalem, Jerusalem the very middle of the world,¹⁵ just as the umbilicus

11. *Yšrym*, "upright," is taken as intimating *Yšr'l*, "Israel."

12. See *Shek* 1:1.

13. Two *zuz* or 24 *pondion*, that is, 24 coppers.

14. In the Song of Songs the dialogue between the lover and his beloved is construed by the Rabbis as God's courtship of Israel before the revelation at Sinai. See *Piska* 5.4-5.

15. On Jerusalem as the middle of the world see *Ezek.* 5:5; *B.Yoma* 54b;

is set in the very middle of a man. Or perhaps in the words *Thy navel is like a round goblet*, God's allusion to the umbilicus should be understood as follows: Even as the fetus drinks from the goblet of life through the umbilical cord, this entire people [of Israel] drinks its life¹⁶ through the Sanhedrin¹⁷ continually engaged with arriving at verdicts based upon Torah.

In this connection note—as Abin ben Hīṣda¹⁸ used to point out—that the words *'gn hshr*, just rendered “rounded like a goblet,” can also be taken to mean “rounded like the moon.” Indeed in Babylonia¹⁹ the moon is called “the rounded one” (*syhr*). Hence the phrase *'gn hshr*, “rounded like the moon,” also contains an allusion to the Sanhedrin's seating arrangements: for the members did not sit in the form of a triangle, whose lines are straight, but sat in a semicircle, the way people sit half way around a threshing floor, so that judges could conveniently see one another.²⁰ Had they been seated in the form of a triangle, those seated in the corners would have found it difficult to see one another, and consequently would have been unable to consult one with the other. Hence *'gn hshr*: either “like a round goblet,” or “like the round disk of the moon.”

Indeed, what is the literal meaning of *'gn*? A curved shape like a bowl, as evident from the verse *And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in bowls* (*'gnṭ*) (Exod. 24:6): even as a bowl is turned in a curve, so in the same way were the Sanhedrin seated.

What else does the term *shr* (“round”) intimate? That so long

Tanhuma, *Kēdōšim*, 10; Seḡer 'Eliyahu Rabba, ed. Friedmann, p. 21; Jubilees 8:17, Enoch 21:1; and *Oṣar Midrāšim*, ed. Eisenstein, p. 104. The Greeks spoke of Delphi as the center of the earth. See *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. “Delphi.”

16. “its life”—Parma MS; PE: “its existence.”

17. [Literally “Even as the navel is the life(-source) of the infant, so this entire people (of Israel), its life hangs on the merit of the Sanhedrin.” L. N.]

18. He came to Palestine from Babylonia.

19. “in Babylonia”—Parma MS.

20. The presiding justice was in the middle of the line of the judges forming the semicircle. The Sanhedrin did not close the circle in order to permit witnesses to face the judges as the witnesses were being examined. See Rashi on B.Sanh 37a, and Exod. Rabbah 5:12.

as the judges of the Sanhedrin sat, the world successfully continued its round of commerce (*shr*) and increase (*skr*).

The verse goes on to say, *Wherein exact mingling is not wanting*. For the judges of the Sanhedrin so mingled their decisions—"This is forbidden, and this is permitted"; "this is unclean, and this is clean"—[as to suit the exact requirements of the law].

In another comment, the words are rendered *Wherein no mingled wine is wanting*. He who mixes wine, when expert, puts together in a goblet at least one part of wine to two parts of water. So, too, the Sanhedrin never had fewer than twenty-three [of its seventy present].²¹ How was this managed? Seventy members of the Sanhedrin were seated in the courtroom. And when any of them wished to go out to eat, they did not all excuse themselves at one time. Some of them went out and ate, while some stayed in their places until the first came back, and then they would go out. Thus their number was never less than twenty-three.

Another comment: *Wherein no mingled wine is wanting*. Read it not thus, but *wherein the Mingler*²² *of wine is not wanting*, that is the Holy One, blessed be He,²³ who on account of the merit of the Sanhedrin did not make the people of His world want for Him, but let His glory dwell among them. Once the Sanhedrin ceased to be, the Presence removed itself.

3. *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat* (Song 7:3). This heap is Israel. And why are Israel likened to wheat? Because the circumcision at the middle of Israel's belly is like the split down the middle of a grain of wheat, a split which you do not find in lentils or in any other cereal. And why are grains of wheat

21. Twenty-three or a third of the Sanhedrin was the quorum required to pass on capital cases. In the parallels, B.Sanh 37a and Num. Rabbah 1:4, it is said that before leaving the room the members of the Sanhedrin would check to make certain that no fewer than 23 remained in attendance.

22. By a slight change, *mazeg*, "mingled wine," may be read *mozeg*, "the Mingler of wine."

23. The Supreme Mingler of all elements.

split? [To distinguish them], all other cereals being inferior to wheat.²⁴

Another comment: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*. R. Huna said in the name of R. Idi: Is not a heap of cedar cones or a cluster of pepper plants more beautiful than a heap of wheat? And since the Holy One, blessed be He, wished Israel to know how dear they were to Him, He ought to have called them a heap of cedar cones. It is possible, however, for the world to get along without cedar cones and without pepper plants; but it is impossible for the world to get along without wheat. Should the world lack cedar cones or pepper plants, would the lack concern its inhabitants? But should it lack wheat, there would be no life for them—not even for a short time.

Another comment: *Thy belly, [Leviticus, the middle part of the Torah], is a heap of wheat (ḥṭym)*, which R. Johanan used to read: "A heap of precepts against various sins (ḥṭ'ym)." Such as? Say, a dish of food forbidden by the law concerning *piggul* or *noṭar*, or abdominal fat of the kind which may not be eaten,²⁵ is set before a Jew, and he is about to eat of it, thinking it fat of the kind that he is permitted to eat. But upon being told that it is abdominal fat of the kind which may not be eaten, at once he withdraws his hand and refrains from eating of it. Who restrains him from eating? What hedge is there between him and the dish? Only the precepts of Torah that he keeps in mind, which is to say that he is *hedged in with lillies (ibid.)*. This part of the verse demands that it be further expounded. After all, would a man hedge in a field with lilies?²⁶ Men usually hedge in their vineyards or their fields with briars and thorns, with

24. Like wheat, Israel is marked by the incision of Abraham's covenant—in an incision distinguishing them from other peoples. For a more complete version of this comment see MTeh 2:13.

25. *Piggul*, literally "abomination" (see Lev. 7:18; 19:7), is a sacrifice rectable in consequence of an improper intention in the mind of the officiating priest. *Noṭar* are the portions of sacrifices left over beyond the legal time and bound to be burnt. *Heleḥ* is the abdominal fat of cattle which it is forbidden to eat (Lev. 3:17). See Jastrow, *s.vv.*

26. "After all, would a man hedge in a field with lilies?"—Parma MS; PE: "After all, would a man hedge in with lilies?"

prickly bushes and shrubs. Have you in all your days ever seen a man who hedged in a field with lilies? The precepts of Torah, however—these are as soft as lilies. Another example? Say, a man is consumed with the desire to enjoy his wedding night in the bridal chamber. There is no greater day for him than the one in which he will take his pleasure of his bride. He spent his money for the wedding feast, he prepared the bridal chamber, and now comes to make love to his wife. But she says to him, I have seen a crimson lily.²⁷ At once he draws away from her: he turns his face one way, and she turns her face another way. What made him draw away from her? What serpent bit him? What scorpion stung him? What hedge stood between them? None other than the words of Torah which are as soft as a lily. Thus *Thy belly*, [Leviticus], *is a heap [of precepts] against sins—[we are] hedged in with lilies.*

4. Another comment: *Thy belly is a heap of wheat.* R. Levi said: How can the congregation of Israel be said to be like wheat? In the following way: A householder has a steward. When the steward comes to cast up his accounts with him, what does the householder take into account? What does the householder say to his steward? Does he say, "Take heed how many wicker baskets of straw you bring into the storehouse? Or how many wicker baskets of stubble, or how many wicker baskets of thorns you bring into the storehouse?" For where does he put the thorns? In the fire. Where does he throw the stubble? It is let go into the sea.²⁸ Where does he deposit foliage cuttings? They are added to a compost heap. Where does he scatter the straw? Before the wind. Now what does the householder really say to his steward? "Take heed! How much wheat are you bringing into the granary?" Why this question? Because wheat is life for the world.

The householder is the Holy One, blessed be He, the fullness of the earth being His, as is said *The earth is the Lord's, and*

27. That is, "I am menstruating." See Lev. 18:19.

28. "Where does he throw the stubble? It is let go into the sea"—Parma MS.

the fullness thereof (Ps. 24:1). The steward is Moses, of whom God said: *He is trusted in all My house* (Num. 12:7). Did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Moses: Take heed to count the [heathen] nations? No, for they are like stubble. Such as? Egyptians: *Thou sendest forth Thy wrath, it consumeth them as stubble* (Exod. 15:7).²⁹ What is done with stubble? It is let go into the water, as is said *He shook off Pharaoh and his host in the Red Sea* (Ps. 136:15). The [heathen] nations are also like thorns, as is said *The peoples shall be as the burnings of lime*, etc. (Isa. 33:12). What is done with thorns? They are thrown into the fire: *as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire* (*ibid.*). They are like chaff. What is done with chaff? It is scattered before the wind, as is said *They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away* (Job 21:18). But Israel is like wheat, which is the staff of life: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*. Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Moses, take heed to count Israel that it be known how many of them there are: *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel*.

Another comment: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*. A wheat plant rises straight up like a palm, its stalk long, its leaves wide and long, and the ear at the very top. Now when the stalk boasts and says, "The field was sown for my sake," and the leaves boast and say, "The field was sown for our sake,"³⁰ the ear of wheat replies: "Behold, harvest time is coming and every one will know for certain for whose sake the field was sown." After the coming of the harvest, the stubble is disposed of in fire, the chaff is scattered before the wind, but the wheat is kept for the granary: whoever passes by takes some grains and kisses them. Likewise, in this world, the peoples of the earth say to Israel that the world was created for the sake of the heathen nations. But in the time-to-come, *The peoples shall be*

29. "*And the house of Esau for stubble*" (Ob. 1:18), deleted, as in Parma MS.

30. "and the leaves boast and say, 'The field was sown for our sake'" — Parma MS.

as the burnings of lime, as thorns cut up shall they be burned in the fire (Isa. 33:12). As for Israel, *Him alone will the Lord lead* (Deut. 32:12). *O put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe* (Joel 4:13).³¹

The commentary above explains why Israel is compared with wheat.

Another comment: *Thy belly is like a heap of wheat*. R. Isaac said: Why like wheat? Consider the handling of wheat. When it is brought into the storehouse, it is brought in by measure and by count; when it is taken out of the storehouse, it is taken out by measure and by count; when it is sown, it is sown by measure and by count. Likewise, the Holy One, blessed be He, took the count of Israel when they came into Egypt: *All the souls . . . that came into Egypt were threescore and ten* (Gen. 46:27). He took the count of them when they were about to leave, as is said *And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot* (Exod. 12:37). And so, too, He took the count of them again as they went forth into the wilderness: *And the Lord spoke unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, etc. Take ye the sum . . . of the children of Israel* (Num. 1:1-2). And here, also, *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel*.³²

5. Another comment: *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel*. R. Levi said: Why did God keep counting them? His action may be compared with that of a Roman governor³³ who had charge of so many treasures that he would not take the trouble to count them all. But he had one small chest filled with gold pieces, which he used to take up all the time, count the pieces in it, then put it aside, only to bring it forth after a few days, and count the gold pieces again. They said to him: My lord,

31. A brief prayer that the Day of Judgment should not be delayed, the time being ripe.

32. Cf. MTeh 2:13-16.

33. Literally "king," which does not fit in the context.

of all the treasures which you have, you take account of none except this small chest! He replied: None of these other treasures belong to me. They belong to the Imperial Treasury,³⁴ and will be sent down to the Treasury, but this chest of mine put me to so much trouble before I was able to acquire it that I am not taken by any of the others—only by this one which I struggled so hard to acquire. So it is with the Holy One, blessed be He. What a number of nations in the world! What a vast number of nations which He does not trouble Himself about! Moses³⁵ exclaimed: "My Lord! Master of the universe! What a number of nations Thou hast in the world which Thou takest no trouble to count! But Thou art always saying: Take the sum of the children of Israel." Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "All these hosts that you see are not Mine. They belong to Gehenna, which, like the Imperial Treasury,³⁶ [consumes all it takes in and keeps demanding more]: *The [heathen] peoples shall be as the burnings of lime* (Isa. 33:12). But these children of Israel whose sum I keep telling you to take, they are Mine own treasure, as is said *Ye shall be Mine own treasure from among all the peoples* (Exod. 19:5). And even as a man's own treasures are dear to him, so these are dear to Me because of the trouble they put Me to. What great cost they put Me³⁷ to!" *Hath God assayed to go and take Him a nation from the midst of another nation by trials, by signs, and by wonders, and by war, and by a mighty hand, and by an outstretched arm, and by great terrors?* (Deut. 4:34). [No wonder that elsewhere] the Holy One, blessed be He, referred to Israel as *Ephraim my dear son* (Jer. 31:20), the son who put Me to payment of so dear a price. Therefore I am not sufficiently taken by any of the nations to ask that the sum of any be taken—only by Israel: *When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel* (Exod. 30:12).

34. That is, the *fiscus* or *aerarium*.

35. "Moses"—Parma MS.

36. The word *mywn*, "Treasury," came to mean "burning" or "destruction." And so here the commentator plays on the double meaning of the word.

37. "Me"—so Parma MS, and so emended by MC; PE: "God."

6. Another comment: Rendered literally, the verse above reads, *Verily thou art to lift the heads of the children of Israel* (Exod. 30:12). R. Jonathan of Beth-Gubrin began his discourse on this reading by citing the verse *And the ordinary man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled; [thereupon Moses pleaded], O that Thou wouldst lift [their heads] for them*³⁸ (Isa. 2:9), and then R. Jonathan proceeded as follows:³⁹ Who is *the ordinary man . . . bowed down*? The people of Israel, called *ordinary men* in the verse "And ye, My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are [ordinary] men" (Ezek. 34:31). When were they bowed down and humbled? When they did that deed of theirs,⁴⁰ the Holy One, blessed be He, humbled them.

Previously, when they stood at Sinai and said: *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do and obey* (Exod. 24:7), a crown was placed on the head of each of them. For, as R. Abba bar Kahana taught in the name of R. Levi, when Israel received the Ten Commandments, one hundred and twenty myriads of ministering angels came down with corselets of armor and crowns in their hands, two of these angels attending each and every Israelite, one setting crowns and the other girding on corselets of armor.⁴¹ But when Israel did that deed of theirs, the same angels came down again, removed the crowns and untied the corselets of armor:⁴² *The children of Israel were stripped of their ornaments* (Exod. 33:6)—not "they stripped themselves," but they *were stripped*, against their will. (What is meant here by *ornaments*? The kind of trappings bedecking royalty, as evident [from the account of the covenant with Israel], in which God is quoted as saying: *I decked thee also with ornaments . . . meet for royal estate* [Ezek. 16:11, 14]). Thereupon Israel were

38. JV: *and Thou canst not bear with them*. See below, the end of this Section, R. Jonathan's reading of the word *wal*, whereby he is enabled to translate the verse thus.

39. "and then R. Jonathan proceeded as follows"—Parma MS.

40. The making of the golden calf.

41. See Piskas 21.7, and 33.9.

42. Removed them from office—until that moment they were a kingdom of priests.

reduced to humbleness, as indicated in the saying *And the ordinary man is bowed down*, namely, Israel—so identified in the words *Ye . . . are ordinary men*—is bowed down.

[Proceeding with his discourse, R. Jonathan went on to say]: *The great man is humbled* means that Moses was humbled: *Now the man Moses was much humbled* (Num. 12:3). Why? Because at the time he went to bring down the Tables of the Covenant from above, Israel in the meantime disgraced themselves in immorality below the Mount,⁴³ and so the angels rose up forthwith to slay him. What then did the Holy One, blessed be He, do for Moses? He said: Wert thou to remain here, there is not sufficient strength in thee to [withstand] the angels: *Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people . . . have dealt corruptly*, etc. (Deut. 9:12). As long as Israel were deemed worthy of going up to Me, thou couldst go up because of them, as is said *And Moses went up* (Exod. 19:3). But now that they have committed a sin, they are on the way down, and thou, too, *get thee down* (Exod. 32:7). Wherefore? Because what befalls thee depends on what they are. Thereupon Moses went down from the Mount, took the calf, ground it to powder and strewed it upon the water, and made them who had committed the offense drink. After that, he spoke in their behalf: *Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot*,⁴⁴ etc.? *Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying: For evil did He bring them forth to slay them in the mountains* (Exod. 32:11-12)? And if Thou slay them, how wilt Thou fulfill the agreement which Thou didst make with the Patriarchs? *O remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants!* (Exod. 32:13). Moses was then received favorably and the Holy One, blessed be He, became reconciled with him. Thereupon Moses began to ask: Master of the universe, *Show me now Thy ways* (Exod. 33:13), by which Moses meant: How is it that having condemned us, Thou now acquittest us? The Holy One, blessed be He, replied [in the

43. See Exod. Rabbah 42:1, where it is said that at that time the children of Israel were guilty of lechery, murder, and idolatry.

44. For the meaning of this question see Piska 11.6.

words of Scripture], *And the Lord said unto Moses: I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken* (Exod. 33:17). Thou askest, How is it? *Thou hast found grace in My sight*⁴⁵ (*ibid.*).

Since his first request was favorably received, Moses began to make another: *Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory* (Exod. 33:18). God replied, "Impossible": *And He said, "Thou canst not see My face"* (Exod. 33:20). Moses pressed God by means of prayer, and the Holy One, blessed be He, then acceded to his prayer, saying: Since thou dost press this matter, I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and even as I pass by I shall defend thee with My hand, so that the angels of anger will not strike thee: *And it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will defend thee with My hand until My [angels of] anger have passed by*⁴⁶ (Exod. 33:22). What did Moses do? He set himself in a cleft of the rock as the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, passed by, and when the angels came to strike Moses, what did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He defended him with His hand,⁴⁷ from which Moses took beams of glory, as is said *God . . . had bright beams*, etc. (Hab. 3:4); whence did they come? *Out of His hand* (*ibid.*).

And when Moses came down to meet Israel, they saw his radiance, surpassing and brilliant. Even as a man cannot look at the sun as it rises, so no man could look at Moses, until Moses put a veil over his face, as is said *He put a veil on his face* (Exod. 34:33). But then there was resentment in Israel. They said: "Because we did that deed, we were on the way down in disgrace, and hence Moses was told to take the way down from the Mount. Now that the Holy One, blessed be He, is reconciled with us and has forgiven our sin, the glory of your person is

45. The conclusion of the verse may be rendered "*And so I will make known to Thee the name [of God]*," that is, make known the 13 attributes of mercy listed in Exod. 34:6-7, attributes whereby God acquits even those who had been deservedly condemned.

46. EV: *until I have passed*. But here a play on the word 'br, which may mean either "pass" or "be angry," is probably intended.

47. "hand"—so probably Parma MS; PE: "hands."

restored, while our glory remains lowered.”⁴⁸ Thereupon Moses betook himself to the Holy One, blessed be He, and said: “When Thou didst humble them, I also was humbled with them, as is said *And the ordinary man is bowed down, and the great man is humbled*.⁴⁹ Since Thou hast lifted up my head [and glory], lift up theirs also.” The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: “Go, lift up their heads.”⁵⁰ Thereupon—R. Jonathan of Beth-Gubrin went on to say in his discourse—Moses said: “No, my Master, even as Thou didst lift me up, lift Thou also the heads of Thy children.” And the proof? The verse *O that Thou wouldst lift [their heads] for them*, in which we are to read not *wē-’al*, “Thou canst not,” but *wal*, “O that Thou wouldst,” etc. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: “No. I lifted thy head. Go thou now and lift the heads of My children: *Verily thou art to lift the heads of the children of Israel*.”⁵¹

7. Another comment: *When thou liftest the head*. The text does not use the ordinary expression “when thou countest,” but uses instead *when thou liftest the head*, which can be taken as a command for removal of the head. How may the oddness of this expression be explained? By the parable of a prince who acted offensively toward his father. The king said: “Go, lift his head. Go, raise his head up high.” The executioners heeded the command and took him away to cut off his head. But when the prince’s tutor heard what they were going to do, he betook himself to the father and⁵² said: “Woe is me,⁵³ my lord! You are

48. In the passage, “Because we did that deed . . . while our glory remains lowered,” I follow Parma MS, the reading in PE being corrupt.

49. “the great man being Moses” is deleted, as in Parma MS.

50. I.e. stir them to repent. Repentance is thus the glory of God which God showed Moses and bid him impart to the children of Israel.

51. In the passage “in which we are to read not *wē-’al* . . . *Verily thou art to lift the heads of the children of Israel*,” I follow Parma MS. PE, as interpreted by Friedmann: “Do not read *w’l ’th*, ‘Thou canst not,’ but *wlw ’th*, ‘O that Thou wouldst,’ etc. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: ‘Then be it not [as I said]. Even as I lifted thy head, so shall I lift the heads of My children: *When Thou didst lift the heads of the children of Israel*.’”

52. “betook himself to the father and”—Parma MS.

53. “Woe is me”—Parma MS.

about to put your son out of the world! Is he not all you have, an only child? You should not act thus." The king replied: "How can I now act otherwise, since I have already decreed of him that his head be lifted and be raised up high?" The tutor replied: "Your decree may stand nevertheless, and your son remain where he is, unharmed." "But how?" asked the king.⁵⁴ The tutor replied: "With the same command which you pronounced against him—with that very one you can save him and elevate him to a greater dignity in the world. What was it you said—'Go, lift his head'? Yes, let them go and by your decree raise his head to a height even more princely than what it was before. Thus your decree will be upheld, and high rank will be your son's." The king replied: "As you live, since you spoke to me in defense of him, and thereby gave him his life, I shall lift him to greater dignity, exalt him through you."

Israel is the son: *Ye are sons of the Lord your God* (Deut. 14:1). When they acted offensively against the Holy One, blessed be He, and provoked Him, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I shall put them out of the world: *Let Me alone, that I may destroy them* (Deut. 9:14). When Moses heard this, he girded his loins for defense and went to the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: "Master of the universe, Thou art about to put Thy children out of the world. Remember what trouble Thou didst go to in their behalf before they left Egypt. Nay more, remember their Fathers. The evil which Thou wouldst now decree for them is to be eternal." The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "The decree that their heads be lifted has already gone forth." Moses said: "Master of the universe, Thy decree can stand and Thy children remain as they are." "But how?" Moses replied: "What were the words of the decree that Thou didst issue against them? That their heads be lifted?"⁵⁵ In quite another sense, Thou mayest lift their heads high." The Holy One,

54. "'But how?' asked the king"—Parma MS.

55. In the passage "Remember what trouble Thou didst go to . . . That their heads be lifted?", I follow Parma MS. PE: "Remember how much trouble Thou didst go to until Thou broughtest them out of Egypt. Nay more, remember their Fathers. As Moses spoke in their behalf, the Holy One, blessed be He, repented, [but said]: Already it had gone out in a decree that their heads be lifted."

blessed be He, said to Moses: "As thou livest, since thou spakest in their defense, I will exalt them and lift their heads high through thee: *When thou liftest the head of the children of Israel.*"

8. In another comment, the verse is read: *When Thou liftest the heads of the children of Israel.* Citing⁵⁶ R. Jonah of Bozrah,⁵⁷ R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: *When God judges, [He is aware of those in Israel who said of a golden calf]: "This [is thy God]," and so He] puts them down; [He also is aware of those in Israel who refused to worship the golden calf and who deserved His saying of them], "This [shekel they shall give to the building of the Tabernacle]," and them He] lifts up* (Ps. 75:8).⁵⁸ To what can the words *When God judges*, etc., refer but to the time when Israel did that deed of theirs, and when at once Moses came down, ground the gilded thing to powder, strewed it upon the water, *and made the children of Israel drink of it* (Exod. 32:20). At that time—so our Masters taught—anyone whose worship of the golden calf had been observed by witnesses and who had been given proper warning to refrain, was at once put to death by the sword.⁵⁹ He who had not⁶⁰ been observed by witnesses and had not been given proper warning to refrain, was made to drink of the same kind of water whereby women suspected of infidelity to their husbands are tested.⁶¹ And he who had been observed⁶² by

56. "Citing"—Parma MS.

57. "of Bozrah"—so Parma MS and P. Bozrah, a town west of the Jordan, was the home of several scholars. PE: "of Mezoza."

58. JV: *For God is a judge, He putteth down one, and lifteth up another.* The commentator, apparently regarding this statement as obvious, construes the words as referring specifically to events following the making of the golden calf, when God sorted out the children of Israel. Since elsewhere Ps. 75:4 is applied to the revelation at Sinai (see Piska 21.21, and MTeh *ad loc.*), the commentator takes the verses which follow as referring to subsequent occurrences.

59. See Exod. 32:27.

60. "not"—interpolated by ZA.

61. See Num. 5:12-31. A like trial by ordeal was imposed on that part of the people of Israel which was faithless to its God.

62. "who had been observed"—so emended by ZA, and sustained by Parma MS. PE: "who had not been observed."

witnesses but had not been given proper warning to refrain, died in the plague.⁶³ For, as Scripture says, *When God judges . . . [those who said . . .] "This [is thy God" . . . He] puts . . . down; [but . . . those who deserved His saying of them] "This [they shall give" . . . He] lifts up.* Thus every one who had a part in the business of the gilded calf He put down; but every one who had no part in the business of the calf he lifted up, [saying *This they shall give* (Exod. 30:13)], whereof Moses said: *When Thou liftest the heads of the children of Israel* (Exod. 12:13).⁶⁴

9. Another comment: *When Thou liftest the head of the children of Israel.* R. Tanhuma Berabbi in the name of R. Menahem ben Jacob, who cited R. Abun,⁶⁵ began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *If there be for him an angel, an intercessor, one among a thousand,* etc. (Job 33:23). Here Job is speaking of men who because their sins are scarlet⁶⁶ have been stricken ill, [and has in mind the question before the heavenly court as to whether the sinful man is to be restored to good health]: *His flesh becoming tenderer than a child's, he is to return to the days of his youth* (Job 33:25);⁶⁷ *or whether his soul is to draw near unto the pit, and his life to the destroyers?* (Job 33:22). For at such a judgment time, the destroying angels come forth and bring their accusations against the man, and the Holy One, blessed be He, says: Is there not an angel that will speak in his defense? As is said,

63. See Exod. 32:35.

64. See below, Piska 10.15, end.

65. "R. Tanhuma Berabbi in the name of R. Menahem ben Jacob, who cited R. Abun"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Tanhuma the son of R. Menahem ben Jacob, who cited his own father."

66. "who because their sins are scarlet"—Parma MS; PE: "at a time when their sins have brought it about that they are ill."

67. So interpreted by Friedmann in n. 79. MC reads the verse as follows: *His flesh, shaken, is ill; he becomes aware of the days of his hidden sins. [At that time] his soul draws near unto the pit and his life to the destroyers* (Job 33:22). MC thus takes *mn'r*, "than a child's," in the sense of "shaken"; *rtpf*, "tenderer," in the sense of "sick" (as does Targum); and finally, *lwmyw*, "the days of his youth," in its other possible meaning, namely "of his hidden sins."

If there be for him an angel, an intercessor, one among a thousand. According to our Masters, this verse means that if even there are nine hundred and ninety-nine angels who vote for condemnation and only one who votes for acquittal, the Holy One, blessed be He, will tip the scales—if one dare speak thus of Him—for acquittal. According to R. Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilean, the verse means, however, that if in the angel who votes for acquittal, even nine hundred and ninety-nine parts tend to condemn and only one part tends to acquit, the Holy One, blessed be He, will still tip the scales—if one dare speak thus of Him—for acquittal. And how does this conclusion follow from the text? Because, as R. Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilean went on to say, the text does not actually read “one among a thousand,” but “one thousandth part.”⁶⁸ (Thereupon R. Johanan commented: Whenever you hear something stated in the name of R. Eliezer the son of R. Jose the Galilean, shake your ear like a hopper to receive it at once). [Note, however, how the angel phrases his defense of the sinful man]: *For though he means to be gracious to him and says “Deliver him (pd’hw) from going down to destruction,”*⁶⁹ *I have found a ransom*” (Job 33:24)—he uses an unusual form of the word *pdhw* for “deliver him,” that is, the form *pd’hw*. Why does he use this unusual form? Because by inserting an extra consonant in it, he makes the word sound very much like *ps’hw*, meaning “wound him.” Hence even as the angel pleads for the man’s deliverance, he is saying: Let him expiate his sins by suffering wounds, for only thus will he be brought to repentance.

Another comment: The words *Yea, his soul draweth near unto destruction* speak of the people of Israel. When they made the golden calf, the angels came bringing accusations against them. Then it was that Moses said: *For I was in dread of the [angels of] anger and hot displeasure* (Deut. 9:19). It was then

68. “And how does this conclusion follow . . . ‘one thousandth part’”—Parma MS; PE: “But why?”

R. Eliezer apparently understands the unusual word *mny*, “among,” as meaning “one out of,” hence “a thousandth part.”

69. So in the Septuagint which reads *eis diaphthoran*.

also that Moses rose up forthwith, girded his loins with prayer, and speaking in defense of Israel, sought mercy of the Holy One, blessed be He. Indeed, in saying, *If there be for him an angel, an intercessor*, Job makes the identity of the angel explicit—it was Moses, of whom it is said “The Lord . . . sent an angel who brought us forth out of Egypt” (Num. 20:16). How did he seek mercy for them? He said right to the face of the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, *Why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people?* (Exod. 32:11)⁷⁰ and went on to exhort God: *Let Him be gracious and say: Deliver him from going down to destruction.* What did he mean by this exhortation? Moses meant: Master of the universe, I know that they deserve death, in keeping with what Thou didst say to me: *He that sacrificeth unto the gods . . . shall be utterly destroyed* (Exod. 22:19). Nevertheless, I beseech Thee, deliver them from the destroying angels. Remember the merit of the Fathers: *Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants to whom Thou didst swear by Thine own self* (Exod. 32:13).⁷¹

10. *When Thou liftest up the head.* R. Tanḥuma Berabbi, citing R. Samuel, began his discourse as follows: *Many there are that say of my soul: “There is no salvation for him in God ever.”*⁷² *And Thou, O Lord? A shield about me; my glory, and the lifter up of my head* (Ps. 3:3-4). *Many there are that say.* That is, his enemies, as they rejoiced and gloated over David because he had stumbled into that sinful deed of his,⁷³ were saying: “Henceforth there is to be no salvation for this one.” Indeed, David, too, said this of himself: “Many there are, besides my own soul, that say, ‘There is no salvation for him,’” etc.⁷⁴ *And Thou, O Lord?* Of course, I know only too well what Thou didst say in the Torah: *Both the adulterer and the adulteress*

70. After all, Moses pleaded, their offense consisted in worshiping not a rival God, but a gilded thing, incapable of doing anything. See Piska 11.6.

71. The concluding part of this discourse is missing.

72. In Rabbinic exegesis *slh* is generally rendered “ever.”

73. With Bath-sheba, 2 Sam. 11.

74. A somewhat changed rendition of Ps. 3:3 seems to be necessary.

shall surely be put to death (Lev. 20:10). But then, when Nathan came and said to me: *The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die* (2 Sam. 12:13), [I rejoiced, for] I knew that Thou didst shield me: *And Thou, O Lord—a shield about me.* Nay more. *My glory, and the lifter up of my head.* By my glory is meant kingship; and by *the lifter up of my head* is meant the anointing oil.

Another interpretation: *Many there are that say of my soul* has reference to the people of Israel. On what occasion? When they made the golden calf, for then all the nations of the earth began gloating over them, talking contemptuously of them, saying: "Henceforth, these people will have no lineage⁷⁵ and no salvation"; *Many there are that say of my soul: "There is no salvation for him,"* etc. *And Thou, O Lord?* I know only too well that Thou agreeest with them, since Thou didst write in the Torah: *He that sacrificeth unto the gods . . . shall be utterly destroyed* (Exod. 22:19). But then, when Moses said: *Remember Thy servants* (Deut. 9:27), *Turn from Thy fierce wrath, and repent* (Exod. 32:12), and God did repent—*And the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people* (Exod. 32:14)—then we knew that Thou wouldst shield us: *And Thou, O Lord—a shield about me.* Nay more. *My glory, and the lifter up of my head.* By my glory is meant the Tabernacle: "And let them make Me the Sanctuary" (Exod. 25:8); and by *the lifter up of my head*, the theme of the passage *When Thou liftest up the head* (Exod. 30:12) is intimated.

11. In another comment, the words are read *When thou liftest.* In many places we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: *Lift up the head of the children of Israel* (Num. 1:2), *when thou liftest.* Why such commands? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, in whatever way thou canst elevate that nation, elevate it, for thereby thou elevatest Me, as it were. (An intimation that God spoke thus is to be found in the verse *When thou liftest the Head of the children of Israel.* Note

75. [literally "endurance." L. N.]

that the text does not say "when thou liftest the children of Israel," but says instead *When thou liftest the Head of the children of Israel*, the Head of the children of Israel being none other than the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said *And their king is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them* [Micah 2:13]). How is God's command to Moses that he elevate Israel to be illustrated? By the parable of a man who sat making a crown, setting precious stones and pearls in it. A passerby saw him and said to him: "Set all that you can set in it, because the crown will be put on a king's head." And by another parable, that of an elder who had a cloak which he carefully kept shaking out and folding. Thereupon his pupil said: "See how many cloaks you have! And yet you take better care of this one than of all the others." The master replied: "I am more careful of this one because I had it on when I was appointed elder—this is the very one I wore at the time."⁷⁶ Similarly the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Take special care of this nation. Of all the nations that I created in My world, it was the first to proclaim Me king, saying, 'This is my God, and I will glorify Him'" (Exod. 15:2). And by still another parable, that of a king who had many purple cloaks. But he had one cloak in particular about which he was always giving orders to the keeper of his wardrobe, who said: "My lord king, see how many cloaks you have! And yet you give me more orders concerning this particular one than all the others." The king replied: "I must take special care of this one, for I had it on when I was made king"⁷⁷—this is the very one I wore at the time." So the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Take special care of this nation, because at the Red Sea, when it said to Me, 'This is my God, and I will glorify Him,' it was the first to proclaim Me king. Therefore do thou elevate them": *When thou liftest up the head*.

76. "Thereupon his pupil . . . the very one I wore at the time"—Parma MS; PE: "He used to say to himself: Of this one I must take special care, because it was the one I had on when I was appointed elder."

77. "for I had it on when I was made king"—Parma MS; PE: "with this one I wed a princess."

12. In another comment, the words are read *When thou bearest the Head*. R. Samuel bar Nahman said: In this passage are three consecutive requests for contributions for the Sanctuary,⁷⁸ the first request being for the sockets, [the grooved sills which served as the foundation] of the Tabernacle.⁷⁹ When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "Tell them that they are to bring shekels," forthwith the children of Israel brought them and melted them down and made sockets out of the ingots. Once sockets were made, the boards were set in them, and then the curtains were stretched over the boards.⁸⁰ And why [the command that rich and poor alike share the cost of the foundation of the Tabernacle]? Because all in Israel, [rich and poor alike], would be bearing from place to place the Tabernacle into which the Presence would come: *When thou bearest the Head*.⁸¹ And if you choose not to infer [the presence of God in the Tabernacle] from this passage, then you can do so from another passage: *Because the service of Holiness was upon them, indeed they bore it upon their shoulders* (Num. 7:9).

Another comment: *This they shall give* (Exod. 30:13). Into how many small coins may the half-shekel, of which the Holy One, blessed be He, said *This they shall give*, be changed? Into six *grammata*,⁸² whereby the Holy One, blessed be He, meant to remind them that their sin [of worshiping the golden calf] began with the sixth hour in the day: *For in the sixth hour* (*bšš*), *when Moses* [*was expected to come down from the*

78. The three requests for contributions were: (1) for the making of the sockets (Exod. 38:25-29); (2) for the public sacrifices—for these two everyone, rich and poor alike, was called upon to give half a shekel; and (3) for the utensils in the Tabernacle and for the garments which the priests were to wear. The gold, the silver, and the brass required for these were contributed by all Israelites, each contributing what he was prompted to give. The intimation that there were three requests for contributions for the Sanctuary is found in the threefold repetition of the phrase, *an offering to the Lord*. See Exod. 30:13-15 and Rashi; and P. Shek. 1:1, 45d.

79. See Exod. 38:27.

80. See Exod. 36:14-30.

81. As above in this Piska, *the Head* is taken as a reference to the Divine Presence.

82. A *gramma* is one twenty-fourth of an ounce.

Mount] (Exod. 32:1).⁸³ Therefore each half-shekel they brought was considered as made up of six *grammata*. The Rabbis taught, however: Since Israel's sin began when the day was half gone, they had to bring half a shekel to serve as a token of expiation: *This they shall give . . . half a shekel*. And how much is half a shekel? Ten *mē'ah*.⁸⁴ The Holy One, blessed be He, in saying *This they shall give*, specified the half-shekel, a coin made up of ten *mē'ah*, so that through the ten *mē'ah* Israel would symbolically atone for having transgressed against the Ten Commandments: *This they shall give, every one that transgressed the Commandments*⁸⁵ (Exod. 30:13).

In another comment, the verse is read *As though it were fire*,⁸⁶ *they shall give*. The Holy One, blessed be He, took a coin of fire about the size of half a shekel, and said to Moses: *As though it were fire [in his hand], they shall give, every one that transgressed*.⁸⁷

13. Another comment: *This they shall give*. Come, behold God's love of the people of Israel! For even their transgressions bring them to great accomplishments—and their good deeds all the more so. For example, Joseph was sent by his father to go to his brothers, who as soon as they saw him conspired to slay him, as is said *And they said one to another . . . "Come now*

83. The word *bīš* means, of course, "delayed." But in this comment, the word is read as though made up of *b'*, "came," and *šš*, "the sixth," that is, noon, when Moses was expected to come down from the Mount. Since he failed to come down, the people, frantic, made the golden calf. See Rashi.

84. A *mē'ah* corresponds to the obol.

85. IV: *This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered*. By means of a slight change in vowels the commentator takes the word *pkwdym*, "that are numbered," to mean "Commandments." The words in Exod. 30:13 which follow, *the shekel is 20 gerahs* (*gerah* being another word for *mē'ah*), are thus construed by the commentator as an oblique reference to the Ten Commandments which the children of Israel had violated.

86. Apparently the word *zeh*, "this," in Exod. 30:13 is here taken as a derivative of the Aramaic root 'z', "to fire, to make hot," Dan. 3:19, 22. Cf. MTeh 68:5.

87. As a man touches fire with dread, so Israel would offer the half-shekels with dread at what they had done and with dread of sinning again.

therefore, and let us slay him" (Gen. 37:19-20). As they were getting ready to cast him into the pit, they said: Let us eat and drink, and then we shall take hold of him, lift him up, and slay him. After they ate and drank, and were about to say the Grace after Meals, Judah said to them: "We are about to slay, and yet we would say Grace to the Holy One, blessed be He! We are nothing other than blasphemers!" For what else can the words *What! An act of spoliation! If we then slay our brother!* (Gen. 37:26) mean except that Judah had in mind the verse "He who despoils, then says Grace, blasphemes the Lord" (Ps. 10:3), and hence went on to say: *Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites* (Gen. 37:27).

[But before Judah spoke], *They sat down*—as Scripture tells us—to eat bread (Gen. 37:25). R. Judah the Levite the son of R. Shallum said: That one act of sitting down, when the Fathers of the Tribes sat down and taking counsel against Joseph finally decided to sell him, benefited the entire world. For he was sold into Egypt, and during the years of famine provided sustenance to the entire world. Accordingly, the words *They sat down to eat bread*, properly understood, mean "they made it possible for the entire world to eat bread."

Now if even a transgression of theirs was the means by which the entire world remained alive, how much more and more could be expected of a good deed of theirs!

A like conclusion is to be drawn from the passage from Exodus discussed above. What was the cause of the regulations set out in the chapter on the giving of the half-shekel? The transgression of worshiping the golden calf was the cause. Now if their transgression led to the doing of God's command, how much more and more could be expected of a good deed of theirs! [Because good comes out of Israel's transgression even as it does out of Israel's obedience, God could say to Israel]: *Thou art all fair, My love; and there is no spot in thee*⁸⁸ (Song 4:7).

88. See Piska 5.4-5; and Tanḥuma, *Ki tišša'*, 2.

14. In another comment, the words are read *When thou takest the sum* (Exod. 30:12). Israel were counted on ten occasions. Once when they came down into Egypt: *All the souls of the house of Jacob, that came into Egypt, were threescore and ten* (Gen. 46:27). And once when they came up out of Egypt: *About six hundred thousand men on foot* (Exod. 12:37). And once, in this passage now being discussed: *When thou takest the sum*. And twice in the Book of Numbers.⁸⁹ And twice in the days of Saul: *And he numbered them in Bezek* (1 Sam. 11:8); *And numbered them in Telaim* (1 Sam. 15:4). And once in the days of David: *And Joab gave up the sum of the numbering of the people unto the king* (2 Sam. 24:9). And once in the days of Ezra, as is said *The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand*, etc. (Ezra 2:64). And once again in the time-to-come: *The flocks shall pass again under the hands of him that counteth them, saith the Lord* (Jer. 33:13).

Whenever they were counted by divine command, a pestilence did not smite them. But whenever they were counted not by the divine command, a pestilence smote them. And when were they counted not by the divine command, so that a pestilence smote them? In the days of David, as is said *And Satan stood up against Israel and moved David to number Israel* (1 Chron. 21:1). Immediately pestilence smote them, as is said *So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel* (1 Chron. 21:14). Yet what loss they sustained in the days of David was made up in the days of Solomon: [*Again*] *Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude* (1 Kings 4:20), this verse being part of the lesson in the Prophets for the day. R. Tanhuma Berabbi found the same idea of compensation in his discussion elsewhere of the verse *I went down into the garden of nuts, to look at the green plants of the valley* (Song 6:11).⁹⁰

15. Another comment: *When thou takest the sum, etc., then shall they give, every man, a ransom for his soul* (Exod. 30:12).

89. Once in connection with arranging the standards of the Tribes, Num. 2; and once again in Num. 26 in connection with the division of Canaan.

90. See Piska 11.2.

Why at this point should there be mention of *a ransom for his soul*?⁹¹ The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Moses, because they made the golden calf they deserve the death penalty, but let them instead give a ransom for their soul: hence *they shall give every man a ransom for his soul*. When Israel heard this command, they were vexed and said: We worked hard plundering the houses of Egyptians and taking their money, but all for naught—their money is to be thrown away. For in the Torah it is written that when one pays money as ransom,⁹² the penalty may be as high as a hundred shekels of silver.⁹³ We violated the Divine Word: we preferred false charges against God's care of us in the wilderness, and then committed an offense against Him. So, to begin with, each and every one of us will be required to give at least fifty shekels of silver, as must one who has violated a woman. And also we must pay as one who has seduced a virgin: *And if a man seduce a virgin that is not betrothed* (Exod. 22:15). How much of a fine is he supposed to pay? *He shall pay money according to the dowry of virgins* (Exod. 22:16). Accordingly, each and every man in Israel will have to give up at least fifty more shekels of silver, for we are to be considered seducers who used the Word with guile, and we did not keep our word: *But they beguiled Him with their mouth, and lied unto Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast with Him* (Ps. 78:36-37).⁹⁴ Not only are we to pay as violaters and seducers,⁹⁵ but it may be that we are also in the category of the ox owner whose ox is wont to gore, and has gored a manservant.⁹⁶ How much of a fine must the owner of such an ox pay? *If the ox gore a bondman or a bondwoman,*

91. "Why at this point should there be mention of *a ransom for his soul*?"—Parma MS.

92. [Literally "fine." L. N.]

93. See Deut. 22:19, 29, where the fine for preferring false charges against a wife is set at 100 pieces of silver, and the fine for violating a virgin at 50 pieces of silver.

94. They said, *All that the Lord hath spoken will we do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7), and then forgot all about their promise.

95. Literally "And not only this, and not only this."

96. [*ʿAdam ʿebed* would seem to be a scribal error for *ʿebed ʿadam*, "another man's servant." L. N.]

he shall give unto their master thirty shekels of silver (Exod. 21:32). And the fact is, we made ourselves an ox:⁹⁷ "Thus they exchanged their Glory for the likeness of an ox that eateth grass" (Ps. 106:20), and so each and every one in Israel will have to pay thirty shekels of silver more. And we may be considered traducers as well, [and of the traducer it is said] *They shall fine him a hundred shekels of silver* (Deut. 22:19). We traduced the Holy One, blessed be He, who brought us out of the land of Egypt, in saying to a calf: *This is thy God that brought thee up out of Egypt* (Neh. 9:18).

The Holy One, blessed be He, knew what was in their hearts. He told Moses: Say to them, Why are you afraid? I do not ask you to pay as a violater, or as a seducer, or as a traducer, or as an ox owner whose ox is wont to gore, but *This they shall give*. What can the words *This they shall give* mean⁹⁸ except, as R. Meir taught, that the Holy One, blessed be He, took a small coin of fire, called to Moses, and said to him: *As though it were fire [in his hand]*⁹⁹ *they shall give*.

When David saw that by means of the word *this* they were given ransom,¹⁰⁰ he proceeded to say: Come and behold the wonders of the Holy One, blessed be He, and His deeds! For with the very word whereby they provoked Him, with the same word He provided ransom for them. *When God judges, "this" putteth down and "this" lifteth up* (Ps. 75:8) The word "this," their saying *This is thy God*, is what put Israel down close to the pit of destruction. And the word "this" also lifted Israel, for with the word "this" He lifted up their horn—exalted them: *This they shall give*.

97. The golden calf.

98. "What can the words *This they shall give* mean"—Parma MS.

99. See above, nn. 86 and 87.

100. [Literally "expiation." L. N.]

PISKA II

SUMMARY

God's replenishment of Israel

On the first of Adar, when sprouts have grown large enough to be recognized as wheat or as barley, public announcement is made that, as it is forbidden to sow certain plants in the same field, so is it also forbidden to keep them if they happen to grow wild there. Thus, even in regard to what grows from the earth, the people of Israel obey many commandments. And because of their obedience, even after chastisement, when they have suffered a reduction in their number, they increase again like the dust of the earth (Sec. 1).

The theme of increase and fruitfulness suggests the garden of nut-trees (Song 6:11) as a symbol of Israel. The health of the nut-tree is compared with Israel's moral health. The four sections of the nut are likened to the four standards of Israel in the wilderness. The nut is a thing of derision or delight like Israel. The protection of the nut's kernel by its shell is like the protection of Israel's Sages by their friends. As the shell of the nut serves no purpose unless it is attached to the kernel, so the unlearned children of Israel serve no purpose and perish from the world when they separate themselves from the Sages. As a heap of nuts is disturbed when even one of them is moved, so when one man in Israel sins, all are disturbed. As a fallen nut may be washed and is then fit to eat, so Israel are washed clean on the Day of Atonement and are fit to live. As nuts allow other fruits to be mixed with them, so Israel allows converts. Nuts may be soft, moderately hard, or hard; among Israel are the soft-hearted, the moderately soft-hearted, and the hard-hearted. As the man who does not know how to climb a nut-tree is likely to fall, so he who does not know how to serve Israel will be punished. Finally, as a nut-tree grows with renewed vigor when its branches have been pruned, so Israel replenishes its numbers after they have been diminished by punishment for sin (Sec. 2).

Even when God condemns many in Israel to destruction, His mercy is such that He does not send them all to their death at the

same time, as is evident from the deaths that took place on Mount Gilboa in the days of Saul and those that took place during the pestilence in the days of David. And when the pestilence came, it is to be noted that He hearkened to the good pleaders who appeared in behalf of Israel and mercifully reduced its duration to one hour. Then in the days of Solomon God made up what loss in numbers Israel suffered in the days of David (Sec. 3).

Israel's likenesses to the stars, the sand, and the dust are considered to be evidences of God's mercy towards Israel (Secs. 4-5). Further evidence of God's mercy is revealed by the fact that when Moses pleaded wittily on Israel's behalf in regard to their making the golden calf, God was constrained to yield and grant the mercy he pleaded for. But though God considers Israel His treasure, it is not to be supposed that He needs Israel for revenue, for the entire world is His (Secs. 6-7).

*Judah and Israel increased, because
even in regard to [the dust of the earth
and] the grains of sand by the shore of
the sea [they heed commandments]*¹ (1 Kings
4:20).²

1. Let our master instruct us: On what day is public announcement made as to what plants must not be grown together in the same field?³ Our Masters of the Mishnah taught as follows: "Public announcement as to what plants must not be grown together in the same field is made on the first of Adar" (Sheḥ 1:1). And why was this announcement made on the first

1. JV: *Judah and Israel were many as the sand which is by the sea in multitude.*

2. 1 Kings 4 used to be read as the haftarah for Sabbath *Šēḡalim*.

3. "as to what plants must not be grown together in the same field"—Parma MS. Literally "two kinds." Lev. 19:9 and Deut. 22:9-11 forbid sowing a field or garden with diverse kinds of seed, and sowing a vineyard with diverse kinds, such as wheat and barley, together with grapes. See Kil, passim, and B.Ber 22a.

PE: "announcement made that the half-shekels for the Temple were due."

of Adar? ⁴ Because during all of the preceding ⁵ months the sprouts are so tiny they cannot be recognized for what they are, whether wheat or barley; but by the first of Adar the sprouts have grown large enough so as to be recognized as wheat or as barley. ⁶ Therefore, beginning with the first of Adar public announcement is made that as it is forbidden to sow certain plants in the same field, so is it also forbidden to keep them [if they happen to grow wild there].

You find that the people of Israel deserve to stay alive on the face of the earth if for no other reason than the commandments which they perform in regard to the dust of the earth. For when Balaam said: *Who can count the dust of Jacob?* (Num. 23:10), he meant, who is able to count the reward for heeding the commandments which the people of Israel perform even in regard to the dust of the earth. When an Israelite sows, he takes care to heed the commandment, *Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with two kinds of seed* (Deut. 22:9). When an Israelite plows with an ox, he takes care to heed the commandment, *Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together* (Deut. 22:10). After an Israelite heaps up the store of grain, he gives away a share of the crop to a priest. Who, then, can count the reward for Israel's heeding of the commandments which they perform even with regard to the dust of the earth!

Therefore they keep increasing on the face of the earth. For in saying *Ye may be strong* (Deut. 11:8), ⁷ Scripture means that Israel will ever increase in numbers. ⁸ Indeed, even when Israel

4. Friedmann interpolates at this point the following: "In order that Israel bring their half-shekels in time, and also in order that the money which is taken out of the Sacred Treasury be taken at the proper time from the new contributions, that is, on the first of Nisan."

5. "the preceding"—Parma MS.

6. "but by the first of Adar . . . be recognized as wheat or as barley"—Parma MS.

7. In the preceding verses it is stated that the sea swallowed the Egyptians, and that the earth swallowed Dathan and Abiram. In contrast, the children of Israel who keep God's commands will grow strong and increase in numbers.

8. "*Ye may be strong*, Scripture means that Israel will ever increase in numbers"—Parma MS; PE: *Ye may be strong and go in, and increase in number and possess the Land* (Deut. 11:8).

are moved to commit an offense the penalty for which is a reduction in their number, and the Holy One, blessed be He, in anger at them, brings chastisement upon them so that they indeed suffer a reduction in number, they will nevertheless increase again. So you find that in the days of David, when Joab counted the people of Israel, seventy thousand of them passed away in consequence of the counting,⁹ yet in the days of Solomon they increased again to more than what they had been. And whence do we know this? From the lesson in the Prophets: *Judah and Israel increased, because even in regard to [the dust of the earth and] the grains of sand by the shore of the sea [they heed commandments].*

2. <*Judah and Israel increased.*> R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: Consider the verse just cited in the light of what the holy spirit, [quoting God's words to Israel at the time of their nuptials], said through Solomon: *I went down into the garden of nuts*¹⁰ (Song 6:11). Why is a garden of nut-trees a symbol of Israel? Because, as R. Joshua of Siknin taught in the name of R. Levi, all other kinds of trees, when sickly, must have earth packed down over their roots in order to recover; but the nut-tree, when sickly, must have its roots exposed¹¹ if it is to recover. The same is true of Israel: *He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso exposeth them by confession and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy* (Prov. 28:13).

Again, how can a nut-tree be a symbol of Israel? Because as a nut has four equal sections meeting at its center, so had Israel: when they went forth into the wilderness, Moses di-

9. See 2 Sam. 24:15; and Piska 10.14.

10. See Piska 5.4, 5. In Jewish commentary the Song of Songs is interpreted as a dialogue between God and Israel.

The nut, according to Philo (*The Life of Moses*, 2, 181; ed. Colson, 6, 539), "signifies perfect virtue."

11. The larvae of certain beetles which deposit their eggs in the roots of nut-trees are killed by exposure to air. I am indebted to Professor Y. Feliks of Bar-Ilan University for this information.

vided them into four standards with the Presence at their center, as is said *Then the Tent of Meeting, with the camp of the Levites, shall set forward in the midst of the camps* (Num. 2:17).

Another comment: Like the nut which may be a plaything for a child, and on the other hand, a thing of delight for kings, so Israel, when they merit it, [shall delight kings]: *Kings shall be thy foster fathers* (Isa. 49:23); but when Israel sin, [they find that they have to confess]: *I am become a plaything to all the peoples*¹² (Lam. 3:14).

Another comment: As the kernel of a nut is protected by its shell, even so Israel[’s Sages] occupied with Torah are protected by their [less learned] friends who occupy themselves with loving care [of the Sages].

Another comment: As long as the shell of the nut is attached to the kernel, it is valued, but once separated, it is thrown onto the refuse heaps. Even so with Israel. As long as their [less learned] followers keep themselves attached to the Sages and listen to their teachings, they will be privileged to own two worlds, this world and the world-to-come; but once they separate themselves from the Sages, they perish from out of the world.

Another comment: Since two shells must be peeled away to expose the kernel of the nut, the nut is considered to be symbolic of the children of Israel, for, as R. Abin says, when they are circumcised, two layers of skin are cut away so as to expose the glans.¹³

Another comment: Why like a nut? Because all other fruits, when they fall to earth, make no sound, but when the nut falls to the earth, the sound goes about the garden. So, too, when a righteous man dies, the report of his worth goes throughout the world.

12. MT: *to all my people*.

13. The reference here is to two stages in the operation—*milah*, the excising of the foreskin; and *pēri’ah*, the rolling back of the inner lining of the prepuce, thereby exposing the glans. See *JE*, s.v. “Circumcision.”

Another comment: With all other fruits, it is possible for a man to take some pieces of a particular kind out of a sack, and the other pieces, whether dates, mulberries, or figs, will not be disturbed. But with nuts—as soon as you reach in your hand and take a few of them, all the others tumble around and are disturbed. So it is with Israel: When one man sins, all are disturbed: *One man sins, and Thou art wroth with all the congregation* (Num. 16:22).

Another comment: All other fruits, once they fall to earth, get soiled, and a man's instinct makes him shy away from eating them. But the nut, if it falls and gets soiled, may be washed and is then fit to eat. So, too, with Israel: If they get soiled with sin during all the days of the year, when the Day of Atonement comes, they are washed clean of their sin, as is said *For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your sins shall ye be clean*, etc. (Lev. 16:30).

Another comment: Nuts are put into a basket, and if a man wishes to put sesame or pepper or peas among them, the nuts will accommodate them—something which is not true of any other fruit, and cannot be said of dates or figs but only of nuts. Even so Israel accept into their midst every one who comes to be converted.

R. Levi said: There are three kinds of nuts: *Perek* nuts whose shell is soft,¹⁴ those whose shell is moderately hard, and those whose shell is very hard. The nut with a soft shell bursts open of itself; the nut with a moderately hard shell will crack open when you strike it; and the nut with a hard shell is too hard to be cracked, so that when you strike it with a stone you shatter it, and then you do not get the good of it. So, too, the Israelites: there are men among them who do good of their own accord—these are the soft-hearted; there are men among them who, when you ask them to give charity, will give at once—these are the moderately soft-hearted; and there are those among them from whom, no matter how hard you press them,

14. Nuts from *Perek*, the modern Ferka near Samaria, were noted for their soft shells. See Or 3:7; and Montefiore, *RA*, p. 413.

nothing good ever comes. Nevertheless, R. Levi went on to say, among the people of Israel, even the door which will not open to give charity will open wide to give when [illness presses and] the physician comes.¹⁵

Another comment: *Into the garden of nuts*. The nut-tree is smooth. He who is not expert in climbing it will fall down immediately—one must really know how to keep himself from falling off it. So everyone who serves the people of Israel, as did Moses, Isaiah, and Elijah, must keep watching himself, so that he will not take a fall at their hands. After Moses said: *Hear now, ye rebels* (Num. 20:10), he was repudiated: *Ye shall not bring this assembly into the Land* (Num. 20:12). After Isaiah said: *And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips* (Isa. 6:5), immediately *One of the seraphim with the power to crush his mouth*¹⁶ *flew against him* (Isa. 6:6). After Elijah said: *For the house of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant* (1 Kings 19:10, 14), he was repudiated: *And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room* (1 Kings 19:16). It goes without saying, as another comment has it, that he who serves Israel is to take care [to serve Israel and not himself], so that he perish not as did Doeg and Ahithophel.¹⁷

Another comment: *Into the garden of nuts*. The nut is either a paltry toy for children or a thing of delight for kings. So it is with Israel: when they do the will of the Lord, they lord it over kings [who take delight in them]: *Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshiped Daniel* (Dan. 2:46), who in lordly manner said to another king: *Let thy gifts be to thyself* (Dan. 5:17). But when Israel do not do the

15. According to Friedmann (n. 25) the meaning is that even a miser becomes generous when he falls ill.

16. JV: *a glowing stone (rispah) in his hand*. However, *rispah* is read *roṣ peh*—"crush the mouth [of him who spoke calumny of My children]." See Piska 33.3; and Song Rabbah 1:6.

17. The two men of great intellectual distinction, in their ambition to reach power, became slanderers, and in consequence received their due. See Ps. 52 and 57, and MTeh.

will of the Lord, they become a paltry toy, an object of derision to the nations: *I am become a derision to all the peoples*¹⁸ (Lam. 3:14).

Another comment: *Into the garden of nuts* ('gwz) is taken by R. Joshua <ben Levi¹⁹ to mean "the garden" which I am always pruning (gwzz)." When the nations of the earth sin, I am patient with them. But Israel—I allow them no time at all: the moment they sin, I prune them back. Nevertheless, any plant which is pruned back, soon puts out new shoots and makes better growth. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Even though I prune them back, I made them increase over what they were, for Israel is as the sand which cannot be numbered: *Judah and Israel increased*, etc.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Israel is Mine own treasure—*Ye shall be Mine own treasure* (Exod. 19:5). And what is the essence of possessing a treasure? Its master is not happy when he has to dip into it. And if his hand is forced so that he finds it necessary to take some of it, he will at once get busy so as to return what he took away from it. As the owner of a treasure, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Even though wrongdoing brought it about that Israel be reduced in number, it is for Me to increase them over what they were: *Judah and Israel increased*.

3. Another comment: *Judah and Israel increased*. For what reason had they grown few? When Samuel told Saul that the children of Israel should go forth to blot out the very name of Agag,²⁰ and they disobeyed the command, there were two hundred and ten²¹ thousand men of war in Israel, as is said *And Saul . . . numbered them in Telaim, two hundred thousand footmen, and ten thousand men of Judah* (1 Sam. 15:4), and

18. MT: *to all my people*.

19. Instead of "R. Joshua" Parma MS has "R. Simeon"; P: "R. Joshua ben Hanina."

20. His kith and kin, all of whom were regarded as descendants of Amalek. See 1 Sam. 15.

21. So Parma MS; PE: "220."

in that moment all of them were condemned to destruction [for their disobedience]. But the Holy One, blessed be He, said: If they should all go at the same time, the line of Israel cannot endure. Behold, then, I shall take them some at a time. And thus seventy thousand of them died in the plague [in the days of David]; and the others together with Saul on Mount Gilboa.²²

But where is it said that men of Israel, [because of their disobedience in regard to Agag], were doomed to die even into the days of David's rule? To what else can the words *And again* refer in the verse *And again*²³ *the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel* (2 Sam. 24:1)? And just what happened then to cause the anger of God to be kindled again against Israel? In order to understand, take note of the sequence of events as set forth in Scripture. When David got around to counting his mighty men—*Thirty and seven in all* (2 Sam. 23:39)—he counted them only until he got to Uriah the Hittite, [who was the twentieth].²⁴ Thereupon, as we are told in the next verse, *And again the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel*. Hence, you find, David did not get to count the remaining seventeen mighty men. To find the additional seventeen,²⁵ go read in the Book of Chronicles; there you will find them instead, because when David reached the name of Uriah the Hittite [he was stopped] at once [by the Lord's anger]: *And again the anger of the Lord*. What happened may be illustrated by the parable of a king who sat reading the names of all his mighty men from a list. He read So-and-so and So-and-so, reading on and on until he reached the name of So-and-so, when he was told: "This one is dead." His anger kindled, at once the

22. At which time 140,000 perished. The reason that the exact numbers were not indicated in the text was to prevent the news of the destruction from being spread in Gath. See Yalkut Ps. 765.

23. The preceding occasion is taken by the commentator to have been the failure to blot out the kith and kin of Agag.

24. Actually Uriah was not the 20th but the 31st in the list. However, the commentator may not include in the category of "37 mighty men" Joab's armor bearer (2 Sam. 23:37), and may classify ten of the mighty men in the list as belonging to the other élite corps, the corps of 30. See 2 Sam. 23:3.

25. See 1 Chron. 11:41-47; actually 16.

king cast aside the list. Likewise, the Holy One, blessed be He, was reading and counting His mighty men. As soon as the name of Uriah the Hittite was read, we are told, *And again the anger of the Lord was kindled*²⁶ *at once. Thereupon He moved David to number. And David said to Joab the captain of the host: "Go, number Israel from Dan even to Beer-sheba"* (2 Sam. 24:1-2; 1 Chron. 21:1). Joab replied: *Now the Lord . . . add unto the people, how many soever they may be, a hundredfold* (2 Sam. 24:3). And why did he not phrase his reply like the blessing of Moses his master, Moses having said: *The Lord . . . make you a thousand times so many as ye are* (Deut. 1:11), while Joab said only a *hundredfold*? In truth, however, Joab's blessing was better than Moses', for in adding *may the eyes of my lord the king see it*, Joab implied, "And it may be thus in your days, [David, if you will refrain from counting]." For, as Joab went on to say, a census for which there is need is not followed by a decrease in population; but a census for which there is no need is followed by a decrease. Now Joab, as is well known, was a Sage, was president of the Sanhedrin; the words *The counselor that sat in the seat of wisdom*²⁷ (2 Sam. 23:8) refer to Joab as mighty²⁸ in Torah as he was mighty in battle, so that he had the right to ask David:²⁹ *Why doth my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of guilt unto Israel?* (1 Chron. 21:3). *Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab* (2 Sam. 24:4), for David asserted: "Either you are king and I am captain of the host, or you are captain of the host and I am king." When Joab saw that he must go take the census, he went forth without any will for it. To defeat the king's intention he went to the Tribe of Gad, saying to himself, "I know

26. Reminded as He was of David's sin with Bath-sheba.

27. JV: *Josheb-basshebeth a Tachkemonite*. However, the commentator noted that 2 Sam. 23 mentions Joab's brothers Abishai and Asahel by name (verses 18 and 24), and even his armor bearer (verse 37). He therefore concluded that logically the chapter should contain an allusion also to Joab himself. Such an allusion is to be found, according to the commentator, in verse 8, where reference is made to the *chief of the captains*. See V. Aptowitz, *Das Schriftwort in der rabbinischen Literatur*, 3/4 Heft (Vienna, 1911), pp. 76-77.

28. "mighty"—Parma MS; PE: "great."

29. "so that he had the right to ask David"—Margolioth gloss.

that they are fierce men³⁰ who will probably hurl stones at me, and the project will come to naught." But the hour was not propitious, and so he betook himself to the Tribe of Dan, saying to himself, "I know that they are idolaters."³¹ Perhaps the hour of punishment will befall these men who are idolaters, [and when the news gets back to David, he may rescind his decree for the census]. But neither Tribe resisted the census strongly enough [to make any difference], and so he had to betake himself to all of Israel. And because³² he was not favorably disposed to the project, he delayed. You can see this for yourself. You can see it from Scripture's going on to say, *They came to Jerusalem at the end of nine months and twenty days* (2 Sam. 24:8). Nine months for a journey from Dan to Beer-sheba? Of course Joab must have been delaying.

And Joab gave up the sum, the numbering of the people (2 Sam. 24:9). If *sum*, why *numbering*? Our Masters explained: Joab prepared two official returns, one complete and one incomplete,³³ and the complete one he left in his belt, saying: Behold, I shall give up the incomplete one [to the king]. Should his anger be kindled, I shall then say: "Here are all of them," even as I give him the sum, the complete return.

Or: *The sum of the numbering*. As Joab went forth to count, he would send word to a man who had five sons: "Go, hide [some of them], and count as you wish." And whatever the man said, Joab wrote down. Hence *The sum of the [people's own] numbering*.

*And there were in Israel*³⁴ (*ibid.*). Why is a feminine form of the verb used to refer to Israel? The Holy One, blessed be

30. Of the Tribe of Gad, Moses said: *He teareth the arm, yea, the crown of the head* (Deut. 33:20).

The statement that Joab went first to the Tribe of Gad and then to the Tribe of Dan is based on 2 Sam. 24:5-6.

31. The graven image of Micah was housed in Dan. See Judg. 18:30; Piskas 12.13, 46.3; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6, 24.

32. "And because"—ZA's and Friedmann's emendation on the basis of parallel in Yalkuṭ Sam. 125; P and Parma MS: "although."

33. The commentator thus explains the discrepancy in the returns of the census as between 2 Sam. 24:9 and 1 Chron. 21:5.

34. Literally *Israel was*; in the Hebrew the verb *was* is in the feminine form.

He, said: "Not one of you stood up against Joab to say to him: 'Why are you numbering me?' You behaved like women!"

*And there were in Israel eight hundred thousand men . . . and the men of Judah were four hundred three score and ten thousand men (ibid.).*³⁵ But the returns of this same census as given in the Book of Chronicles differ, stating that in Israel *there were a thousand thousand and a hundred thousand men* (1 Chron. 21:5). R. Joshua ben Levi said: Do the statements in Scripture lie? Of course not. The verse which says that Israel were fewer in number simply implies that some died during the very time of counting.³⁶

But Levi and Benjamin he did not number among them (1 Chron. 21:6). Why not? Joab said: If David should ask me, "Why did you not number these?" I will reply: "Moses our master did not number them, as is said *Howbeit the Tribe of Levi thou shalt not number*" (Num. 1:49). Therefore Joab did not number Levi among the people of Israel. As for Benjamin, Joab said: Only yesterday so many thousands of them died on account of the concubine in Gibeah,³⁷ and shall I count those who are still living [and cause them to die]? Therefore he numbered neither Levi nor Benjamin.

Another comment: [Joab said]: Levi is the minister of the Holy One, blessed be He, and Benjamin His host³⁸—dare I count them? Therefore he counted neither Levi nor Benjamin. *For the king's word was abominable to Joab* (1 Chron. 21:6). How else is the word *abominable* to be taken except that the project of the census was utterly displeasing to Joab?

At the time of the census Gad the prophet came to David and said to him: What will you choose, three years of famine, three months in flight before them that hate you, or three days of

35. "four hundred three score and ten thousand men"—so P and Parma MS; MT: "five hundred thousand men."

36. "Do the statements . . . the very time of counting"—Parma MS; PE: "The statements in these passages which make out Israel to be fewer in number do not lie. For some died during the very time of counting."

37. See Judg. 19-20.

38. The Temple being partly situated in Benjamin's territory. See Sif Deut. 352.

the sword of the Lord, that is, of pestilence, as is said *Either three years of famine*, etc. (1 Chron. 21:12)? At once David replied to Gad: *I am in a great strait* (1 Chron. 21:13; 2 Sam. 24:14). He was in the situation of one who is asked: Where do you wish to be laid to rest, near your father or near your mother? Woe unto ears that must hear such! So it was with David when he was told: *I lay upon thee three things*, etc. (2 Sam. 24:12). And why three? God said to him, "Three things thou didst say against Saul: *Nay, but the Lord shall smite him; or his day shall come to die; or he shall go down into battle*," etc. (1 Sam. 26:10). Therefore, to correspond to the three choices thou didst entreat for Saul, three choices now are thine.³⁹

An incidental comment on *Three years* (1 Chron. 21:12): But the parallel account in Samuel reads: *Shall seven years . . . come unto thee?* (2 Sam. 24:13). If seven, how three? And if three, how seven? What Gad meant, however, was: What will you have, three years of famine brought on by war, or seven years of famine brought on by drought?

Now David, [deliberating on a choice of famine, flight, or pestilence], thought: If I choose famine, Israel will say: "It is because he is king and his storehouses are full." If I choose to be swept away before a foe, Israel will say: "It is because he has mighty men who will stand by him." Behold, then, I will ask for death by pestilence, which levels the great and the small. *Let me fall now into the hand of the Lord, for His mercies are great; and let me not fall into the hand of man* (2 Sam. 24:14).

As a consequence of his prayer, the penalties to be imposed for David's numbering Israel were successively reduced, from the three years of famine to the three months of flight, from the three months of flight to the three days of pestilence, and even the three days of pestilence were reduced to thirty-six hours, [by counting the days, and not the nights].⁴⁰ Besides, good pleaders appeared

39. "three choices now are thine"—Parma MS.

40. Prior to David's speaking thus Gad asked him: *Shall seven years of famine come unto thee . . . or wilt thou flee three months . . . or shall there be three days' pestilence?* The descending order in time is taken as an intimation that the time of punishment would be reduced.

in behalf of mercy for Israel. There came the seven days of the week, the eight days prior to circumcision—thus fifteen; the five Books of the Pentateuch, and the three Patriarchs—thus twenty-three. According to R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba, there came also the Ten Commandments, and the two Tables of the Covenant—a total of thirty-five in all, pleading for a reduction of the pestilence by thirty-five hours. According to R. Abin the Levite Berabbi, it was [not the Ten Commandments and the two Tables of the Covenant that came but] the twelve Fathers of the Tribes. In any event, there remained only one hour for the pestilence. But behold, how many hosts died out in that brief time!

So the Lord sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed (2 Sam. 24:15). How brief a time is meant by *from the morning even to the time appointed*? According to the elder R. Hiyya, only from the time the daily whole offering was slain until the time its blood was sprinkled [on the altar].⁴¹ According to our Masters, only from the time the east lights up until the first beams of the rising sun.⁴² And according to R. Samuel bar Nahman, only from the time the globe of the sun appears on the horizon until it clears the horizon. In that brief time, they all died—seventy thousand men.

What does the text finally say? *Go up*—Gad said to David—*rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah* (2 Sam. 24:18). At once he went up: *And David went up according to the saying of Gad* (2 Sam. 24:19). Now as soon as he built the altar and presented offerings, what happened then, according to Scripture? *So the Lord was entreated for the Land, and the plague was stayed from Israel* (2 Sam. 24:25). What is implied in the expression *So the Lord was entreated*? R. Judah the son of R. Simon said: The explanation I am about to give of the phrase *was entreated* I did not hear from my father. (It was the colleagues of R. Judah the son of R. Simon who, citing

41. A relatively short time, perhaps an hour. Cf. Yoma 3:4, and Ed 6:1.

42. Cf. MTeh 17:4.

Resh Lakish, conveyed the explanation of *entreated* to him).⁴³ Of Isaac it is said *And the Lord let Himself be entreated of him, and Rebekah his wife conceived* (Gen. 25:21); and here it is written *So the Lord was entreated for the Land*. In saying that *the Lord let himself be entreated* ('tr), Genesis means to say that He let Himself be dug into—this is the literal meaning of 'tr—so that His mercy poured out, and Rebekah bore twins. So here, too, *was entreated* implies birth upon birth—⁴⁴ that is, what loss in numbers Israel suffered in the days of David was made up in the days of Solomon: *Judah and Israel increased as the sand*, etc. (1 Kings 4:20).

4. <Another comment: *Judah and Israel increased as the sand*, etc.> R. Menahema the son of the elder R. Hiyya, citing R. Eliezer ben Jacob, said: Israel are said to be like sand, as is said *Yet the number of Israel shall be as the sand* (Hos. 2:1). What happens with sand? In the evening you dig a pit in it, and in the morning you find that the pit has filled itself. So, too, what loss in numbers Israel suffered in the days of David was made up in the days of Solomon, as is said *Judah and Israel increased as the sand which is by the shore of the sea in multitude*. Again it is said *Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered* (Hos. 2:1). What is the meaning of this passage which begins by speaking of a definite number, *the number of the children of Israel*, and then, apparently retracting, goes on to say of Israel that it *cannot be measured nor numbered*?⁴⁵ The passage implies that the Holy One, blessed be He, let

43. "It was the colleagues . . . the explanation of *entreated* to him"—Parma MS; PE appear to read: "[My] colleagues told me this. And so, citing Resh Lakish, R. Judah the son of R. Simon pointed out that . . ."

44. See [Piska 51.5]. [A paraphrastic translation of the Hebrew sentence whose literal wording is: "Just as in Isaac's case entreaty resulted in twin births, so here also entreaty resulted in birth upon birth." L. N.]

45. "What is the meaning of this passage . . . that it *cannot be measured nor numbered*?"—Parma MS and Yalkuṭ Hos.; PE: "What is implied by *nor numbered*?"

Hosea see what He had let Abraham see when He said to him: *Look now toward heaven, and count the stars, if thou be able to count them* (Gen. 15:5). After God had said *count*, He apparently retracted His words in saying *if thou be able to count*; but Scripture is telling you thereby that God let Abraham see first a definite number of stars, and then turned around and let him see an infinite number. How did God do so? At first He let him see one star, then He let him see two, then let him see three, then twelve, then seventy, and finally, He let him see stars whose number was infinite. And why did He show him [heaven] in this way? Because by such symbols He showed him how He would increase the children of Israel in the world. He showed him one star, because at first he would be the only one of his kind in the world—*Abraham was one* (Ezek. 33:24)—the very first to come and take refuge under the wings of the Presence. God next showed him two stars, to stand for Abraham and Isaac. He then showed him three, to stand for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; then showed him twelve, to stand for the twelve Fathers of the Tribes; then seventy, to stand for the seventy souls that went down to Egypt;⁴⁶ and finally stars without end:⁴⁷ *And the children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied . . . and the land was filled with them* (Exod. 1:7).

Hosea also—[at first] God showed him Israel in a definite number, and then in infinite numbers; that is, at their beginning they could be counted, but then they increased to such numbers that they could no longer be counted.

5. <Another comment:> In *The number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea* (1 Kings 4:20), Israel are

46. "12, to stand for the 12 Fathers of the Tribes; then 70, to stand for the 70 souls that went down to Egypt"—Parma MS; PE: "the 12 Fathers of the Tribes, then 70."

47. In P there follows a duplicated statement: "even as Israel is destined to be fruitful and multiply without end, indeed, as Israel is destined to be fruitful and multiply so that it cannot be numbered." This statement is deleted, as in Parma MS.

likened to sand; [elsewhere in the Book of Kings] they are likened to dust; and in Genesis they are likened to stars. Why are Israel's—Jacob's—children likened to stars? [Why is it that] Abraham is likened to the sun, Isaac likened to the moon, but Jacob and his children likened to stars? Because in the time-to-come the sun and the moon, [eclipsed by God's radiance], will be put to shame, but the stars will not know shame. So, too, Abraham and Isaac [will be put to shame]—on account of their children, their faces will turn pale: Abraham's, on account of Ishmael and the children of Keturah; and Isaac's, on account of Esau and his princes. But even as the stars will not know shame, so Jacob will not know shame: *Jacob shall not now be ashamed, neither shall his face now wax pale* (Isa. 29:22). Why not? *Because he seeth his children, the work of his hands*,⁴⁸ etc. (Isa. 29:23), and each one of them is righteous: *Thou art all fair, My love; and there is no spot in thee*⁴⁹ (Song 4:7).

Or: Even as the stars possess the night, so only at night do Israel have possession of the entire Torah.⁵⁰

Or: Even as the stars accord honor one to the other, and there is peace among them—*He maketh peace in His high places* (Job 25:2)—so the righteous accord honor to one another and love one another. Even as the stars have no strife among them, so the righteous—the desire to do good is among them.

Or: Even as the stars—one of them can consume the entire world—so are the righteous. One such was Elijah, at whose command fire came down: *If I be a man of God, let fire come down from heaven, and consume thee and thy fifty*, etc. (2 Kings 1:12).

Israel were likened also to sand, and the nations to lime: *And the peoples shall be as the burnings of lime* (Isa. 33:12). If you

48. MT: *of My hands*.

49. See Piska 7:7.

50. The day is equated with the written text, which is easily read by all, including Gentiles; whereas the night is equated with the mystery of the Oral Law, a mystery with which only the people of Israel are conversant. See Piska 5, beginning; Exod. Rabbah 47:8; and MTeh 19:7.

do not mix sand with lime, the lime alone will not last. So if there be no Israel, the nations will not endure. Except for Joseph, the Egyptians would have died of famine. And except for Daniel, the wise men of Babylon would have perished.⁵¹

<Another comment:> *The number of . . . Israel shall be as the sand.* In Scripture, [as already stated], Israel are likened to dust (Gen. 13:16), are likened to sand, are likened to stars (Gen. 15:5). In this world they are likened to dust: as the dust is trodden upon by all inhabitants of the world, so are Israel trodden upon by all inhabitants of the world: *For the king of Aram destroyed them, and made them like the dust by treading* (2 Kings 13:7).⁵²

Or: Israel are like the dust of the earth—without it the world could not endure. Without dust there would be no trees and no produce. Likewise, without Israel the nations of the earth could not endure: *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed* (Gen. 22:18). In this world Israel are like the powdery dust of the earth, but in the days of the Messiah they will be like the gritty sand of the sea. What is the nature of sand? It can grind a man's teeth down. So in the days of the Messiah, Israel will grind down all the nations: *Out of Jacob shall one have dominion, and shall destroy the remnant of the city [of Edom]* (Num. 24:19), and also: *I will lay My vengeance upon Edom by the hand of My people Israel* (Ezek. 25:14). Finally, in the time-to-come,⁵³ Israel will be like the stars. Even as the stars shine in the firmament, so will they shine in the time-to-come: *And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament . . . as the stars for ever and ever* (Dan. 12:3).

Another comment: Why are the children of Israel likened to the sand of the sea? Israel are like the sand of the sea because if a man take a fistful of sand and put it into dough or into

51. See Dan. 2.

52. See MTeh 119:13.

53. Which is to follow Israel's triumph over the heathen nations during the days of the Messiah.

broth, no creature can bear the feel of it: it sets his teeth on edge. So he who robs Israel or despoils them in this world will have his teeth set on edge in the time-to-come. Why? Because Israel are holy,⁵⁴ and whoever dares to touch them will pay the penalty.

Another comment: *As the sand*. What is the nature of sand? If a man puts it into fire, he takes it out in the form of a glass ball from which he can shape transparent vessels. So when Israel is put into the fire, they come forth alive, [as was prefigured when Nebuchadnezzar said to those children of Israel who were in the burning fiery furnace]: *Ye servants of God Most High, come forth* (Dan. 3:26). Thus in the time-to-come Israel will enter Gehenna together with all the other nations of the earth, but they will perish in it, while Israel will come forth from it unharmed: *When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee* (Isa. 43:2). Why not? *For the Lord thy God holds⁵⁵ thy right hand* (Isa. 41:13).⁵⁶ Therefore Scripture likens Israel to sand, [which can survive the fire].

6. *And it shall come to pass that instead of that which was said unto them: "Ye are not My people"* (Hos. 2:1). Where was such a thing said to them? At the place they did that deed of theirs, God [repudiated them as His people and] called them "the people of Moses": *Go, get thee down; for thy people . . . have dealt corruptly* (Exod. 32:7). At once Moses girded himself with prayer: *And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said: Lord, why, etc.?* (Exod. 32:11). His question may be understood in the light of a parable: A king who had come into his house saw his wife kissing a eunuch and said to the representative of his wife's family, "I will divorce her, I will cast her out—let her go to her father's house." The representative asked: "My lord, why?" The king replied: "Because I found her

54. "holy"—Parma MS; PE: "a hallowed thing."

55. MT: *For I the Lord thy God hold*, and so Parma MS.

56. Cf. MTeh 1:20.

kissing a eunuch." The other said: "Now she will bring up handsome and valiant sons for you, who will go down with you to battle." The king said: "Nothing is to be expected from her. She cannot bring forth children [begotten by that thing]." ⁵⁷ The other replied: "And because of a thing from which no benefit can possibly come, you are angry?"

Even so, Moses said to God: This thing which Israel has coupled with will be of service to Thee in bringing down rain and answering women in labor.⁵⁸ The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "But this thing has no substance!" Moses then asked: *Why? Why then art Thou angry at it? Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, etc.? (Exod. 32:12). Remember Thy servants, etc. (Deut. 9:27).* What does the text go on to say? *And the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people (Exod. 32:14).* Here Scripture no longer speaks of "the people of Moses" but of *His people*. Hence *instead of that which was said unto them: "Ye are not My people"—"for thy people . . . have dealt corruptly"—it shall be said unto them: "Ye are the children of the living God" (Hos. 2:1), who has "repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people."*

7. <*Judah and Israel increased*, etc. (1 Kings 4:20).> R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: Israel are called the treasure of the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written *Ye shall be Mine own treasure* (Exod. 19:5). When a treasure is diminished, its owner takes care to replenish it amply; so it is with Israel. Indeed it is difficult for the Holy One, blessed be He, to dip into and diminish them. You can see that what diminution they suffered in the days of David was more than made up for in the days of Solomon, as is said *Judah and Israel increased as the sand*. Even as one's proper treasure is better loved by a

57. "Nothing is to be expected from her. She cannot bring forth children [begotten by that thing]"—Parma MS; PE: "Is no good to come from her other than from children [begotten by that thing]?"

58. See MTeh 20:4.

man than all else which he may lay claim to, so are Israel better loved by the Holy One, blessed be He, than all other nations, as is said *The Lord . . . will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth* (Deut. 28:1); and as is said *Thou shalt be blessed above all peoples* (Deut. 7:14).

R. Joshua ben Kōrḥah repudiated another possible reading of *treasure*, a reading so blasphemous as liable to shatter the eardrum of him who hears it. This reading takes God as saying to Israel: Since it is possible for a slave to get rich by gleaning after his master, or a son by gleaning after his father, or a wife after her husband, so is it possible for Me to get rich by gleaning after you. [How false the notion], since Scripture says, *For all the earth is Mine* (Exod. 19:5).⁵⁹

R. Abin said in the name of R. Joshua: In *Ye shall be unto Me (ly)* (Exod. 19:15), the letter *lamed* in the word *ly* is the highest of all the letters in the alphabet, and the letter *yod* in the word is the least of all the letters in the alphabet. It is becoming for the highest of the letters to be joined to the smallest of them. Similarly, *Great is our Lord, and mighty in power* (Ps. 147:5), and *Ye were the least of all peoples* (Deut. 7:7): it is becoming for the Highest to be joined to the least—[to Israel].

In this world, Israel cleave unto the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said *But ye that did cleave unto the Lord* (Deut. 4:4). But in the time-to-come they will become like [the Lord].⁶⁰ As the Holy One, blessed be He, is a fire consuming fire, as is written *For the Lord⁶¹ is a devouring fire* (Deut. 4:24), so shall they be a devouring fire, as is written *And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame⁶²* (Isa. 10:17).

59. I am indebted to Professor Mordecai Margulies for the elucidation of this passage. Cf. Mek, 2, 204.

60. "they will become like [the Lord]"—Parma MS; PE: "they shall be existing [by themselves] and resembling [the Lord]." Cf. Piska 1.2.

61. MT: *the Lord thy God*.

62. The righteous are spoken of in Rabbinic literature as "light" and "the Holy One." See MTeh 22:2,3; and B.BB 75b.

SUMMARY

God's command to Israel
to blot out evil Amalek

The text of the blessing said when one walks through a burial ground is given. As the people buried therein are mentioned by name, their deeds, both good and evil, are also to be mentioned; and so whenever Amalek—responsible for so many burial grounds in Israel—is mentioned, what he did to the children of Israel is also to be mentioned (Sec. 1). If Amalek is not remembered, Israel will be returned to servitude in Egypt (Sec. 2). Unlike Edom and Egypt, Amalek is pure evil (Sec. 3). Esau, Amalek's archetype, sinned against God, against Israel, against his brother, against his father, and against his grandfather. When he was only fifteen, Esau raped a betrothed maiden, committed murder, denied the resurrection of the dead, and contemned his birthright. In the very moment of his birth, Esau sinned against his mother, in that he ripped his way out of her womb; according to another opinion, he was to blame for her not becoming the mother of the twelve Fathers of the Tribes; according to still another opinion, before she died, she requested that her burial be at night, so that he would not be identified as her son at her bier (Sec. 4). But it must be admitted that Amalek drew his strength from Israel's feebleness, a feebleness brought on by Israel's loss of faith in God at Rephidim. In consequence of their feebleness, Moses himself became so feeble that he had to ask Joshua to fight in his place, saying, *Go out, fight, I will stand on the top of the hill* (Exod. 17:9). It took the combined merits of Israel and of all its worthies, past and present alike, to sustain Joshua in his combat with Amalek.

Joshua was selected to lead the fight against Amalek because he was a son of Joseph. Joseph, unlike Amalek, feared God and made little of himself. His hands were clean. He gained the birthright by virtue of his good deeds, he professed his belief in the afterlife,

he spurned the wickedness of Potiphar and his wife, he paid back good for evil, he offered his life for his mother's honor, he guarded himself against lechery, and he comforted his brothers (Sec. 5). Hence in heaven, in the time-to-come, the princely counterpart of Esau will be overborne at once by the arguments of the princely counterpart of Joseph (Sec. 6).

In the end, despite the paternal merits of his ancestor Joseph, Joshua won out against Amalek only because of God's miraculous intervention (Sec. 7). Moses could give Joshua no help, for the hands of Moses were weighted down by the multitude of Israel's sins. In reference to the words *Moses' hands were heavy* (Exod. 17:2), other commentators say that Moses' hands lifted in prayer weighed heavily with God, that when Israel are in trouble their great men share their trouble as Moses did, and that the Ten Commandments delivered to Israel by Moses' hands interceded for Israel.

Not until the days of Esther would Amalek's sun go down (Sec. 8). Such was Amalek's wickedness that God swore by His throne that He would receive no proselyte from the seed of Amalek. Because of God's oath David slew the proselyte who brought the tidings of the death of Saul and Jonathan. As long as Amalek endures, God's face is hidden, His name is not complete, and His throne is not whole (Sec. 9). Beside his other vile acts, Amalek would sever the circumcised organs from Israelites' bodies and fling them toward heaven, hurling reproaches and blasphemies at God above (Sec. 10). Like his forbear Amalek, Haman knew of the punishment that awaited him, but persisted in his evil course (Sec. 11). God's call to Israel to remember Amalek was not uttered in a spirit of revenge, but was meant to remind Israel of their own sin at Rephidim, a sin which brought Amalek down upon their heads (Sec. 12).

Many were Amalek's devices for evil: making use of Israel's genealogical records, he lured Israelites from the safety of their camp and then would either slay them or pollute them by pederasty. Encouraged by his example, other nations dared attack Israel.

Samuel's encounter with Agag is construed as symbolic of what Israel's treatment of Amalek was to be: Amalek castrated Israel in the wilderness, and so Samuel castrated Agag. Repaying cruelty with cruelty, Samuel cut Agag's body apart into olive-size pieces and fed them to ostriches; according to another opinion, he spread-eagled Agag between four pikes fixed in the ground.

Those smitten by Amalek were the sinners in Israel—the enfeebled ones in the rear, such as the idolaters of the Tribe of Dan whom the cloud flung out and struck down; and also the skeptics in Israel, such as those who cried out saying: *Is the Lord among us, or not?* (Exod. 17:7).

Upon their entrance into the Land, Israel were commanded not only to set up a king over themselves and to build themselves the Temple, but also to destroy Amalek and blot out the remembrance of him. When Israel contended that only God could extirpate Amalek, He told them: You need only read every year the passage in Scripture concerning Amalek, and I shall reckon it for you as though you were blotting out his name from the world (Sec. 13).

Remember what Amalek did unto thee

(Deut. 25:17).¹

1. Let our master teach us: He who walks through a burial ground—² how is he to phrase an appropriate blessing? As follows: "Blessed is He who keeps track of each and every one of you."³ Some of our Masters, to be sure, say that he is required to phrase the blessing as follows: "Blessed is He who created you in judgment, who brought death to you in judgment, and who will raise you up in judgment."⁴

A story of R. Hiyya and R. Nathan who were walking through a cemetery: When one of them recited the blessing, "Who keeps track of each and every one of you," the other asked: "But do the dead have any idea [that you are addressing them]?" and his companion replied: [If their lives were holy], there is no dif-

1. Deut. 25:17-19 constitutes the additional lesson in Scripture on the Sabbath preceding Purim, the feast commemorating the downfall of Haman the Agagite, descendant of Amalek. Because Amalek was the first foe to attack the people of Israel after they had come forth a free nation out of Egypt, the Rabbis use Amalek as a term to describe the archenemy of the Jews. See Meḡ 3:4; and Piska 10.1, n. 1.

2. Literally "among the graves," which, according to Lieberman, is a Palestinian term for a burial ground. See his *TKF*, 1, 109. See also Meḡ, 3, 166; and BM 2:10 (ed. Albeck, 4, 72).

3. [Literally "who knoweth the number of all of you." L. N.]

4. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 1082.

ference between the dead and the living, except for the power of speech,⁵ as is said, *Holy men exult in glory; they sing for joy upon their beds*⁶ (Ps. 149:5). From this story it follows that the blessing ["Blessed is He who keeps track," etc.] is the appropriate blessing.⁷

A man who walks through a burial ground knowing that a righteous man is buried in it—is he required, if he mentions the righteous man, to mention his deeds? Solomon said: *The name of the righteous shall be for a blessing* (Prov. 10:7), which, according to Resh Lakish, means that when the Holy One, blessed be He, speaks the name of a righteous man, He speaks well of him, as is said *Shall I hide from Abraham that which I am doing?* (Gen. 18:17), and at once He went on to say *Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation* (Gen. 18:18).⁸ And so of Moses, when the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke his name, He spoke well of him: *Then He remembered the days of old, Moses His servant*,⁹ saying, *Where is he that brought them up out of the sea?* (Isa. 63:11).

On the other hand, when God speaks the name of a wicked man, He speaks ill of him. And who was one such? Amalek. When he came to wage war against Israel, what did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to Moses? *Write this for a memorial in the book* (Exod. 17:14). Moses replied: Master of universes, for the righteous—yes, a memorial is written for them: *And a book of memorial was written before Him for them that feared the Lord*¹⁰ (Mal. 3:16). [But for Amalek?] The Holy One, blessed be He, said: As thou livest, a memorial for the righteous—in

5. Cf. Piska 2.3-4; and MTeh 30:3.

6. The dead, who cannot speak to the living, are able nevertheless to sing the praises of God.

7. What is here rendered "From this story . . . appropriate blessing," is expressed in the Hebrew by the short phrase "Therefore it is appropriate." In his n. 5 Friedmann suggests that the cryptic words mean "There is still another matter requiring elucidation," the matter discussed in the next paragraph.

8. See MTeh 118:1.

9. Here God added the unnecessary but complimentary statement that Moses was His servant, a title of high distinction when the servant is God's servant (see MTeh 18:4). MT: *Moses [and] His people*.

10. "*And a book of memorial was written before Him for them that feared the Lord*"—Parma MS.

order to give them the bounty of reward in the time-to-come; but also a memorial for the wicked, in order to punish them and to wipe out their name, in keeping with the passage prescribed for the day: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee . . . that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek.*

2. <Remember, etc.> Citing R. Tanḥum bar Ḥanilai, R. Tanḥuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Your [reproachful] reminders to me [—do you hope that they] will make you be like unto “ashes”?* *Your eminences—eminences of clay!* (Job 13:12). After his afflictions befell him, this was the verse Job spoke in reply to all his friends whenever they contemned him in harsh words to his face. For when Job said to them: *Your [reproachful] reminders to me [—do you hope that they] will make you be like unto “ashes”?*, he meant: Would you mislead people so as to make them think, when they look at you, that you are righteous like Abraham who likened himself to ashes saying, “I . . . am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27)? The truth is that *Your eminences [are no more than] eminences of clay!*¹¹ You are like that generation who sought eminence by building a high tower in Babel, of whom it is written “And slime had they instead of clay” (Gen. 11:3).

Or the verse may be read *Your memories shall be like unto ashes*, as a warning to Israel to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Two things I command you to remember: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee*, and *Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Deut. 25:19)—remember, two! Know therefore that [should your memory grow dead as ashes] and you do not remember these two commands, nor every year read the passage of Scripture containing them, I shall return you to servitude in another Egypt: *Your eminences to eminences of clay*, “clay” in the sense of the verse “And they made their lives bitter with hard service, in clay and in brick” (Exod. 1:14). Hence *Remember what Amalek did unto thee*.

11. The phrase “the generation of the flood” is deleted, as in the parallel in Tanḥuma, *Ki tēse'*, 5, and as suggested in MC.

3. Another comment: *Remember*, etc. Citing R. Aibu, R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: This exhortation is to be considered in the light of the verse *Be ye not as the horse or the mule, which have no understanding, kicking no matter whether [one pricks him] with a goad, or [pulls him] by a bridle, or [bedecks him] with his ornament, so that no one dares come near him* (Ps. 32:9). So the Holy One, blessed be He, exhorts Israel: Israel, let there be understanding in you. *Be ye not as the horse* in whom there is no understanding. How does a horse behave? Even when a man is about to bedeck him with ornaments or give him fodder, he turns his neck away and kicks the man. So, too, the mule. But you, act otherwise. In you let there be understanding. When you enter the Land of Israel, remember to repay the good his goodness, and the evil his evil.¹² How so? It is written *Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite* (Deut. 23:8). Why not? *for he is thy brother (ibid.)*—whether good or evil, he is still thy brother. *Thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian, because ye were strangers in his land*¹³ (*ibid.*)—whether good or evil, you spent many years among the Egyptians. But Amalek!¹⁴ *Remember what Amalek did unto thee.*

4. Another comment: *Remember*. Concerning this exhortation R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: It is to be considered in the light of the verse *Let the iniquity against*¹⁵ *his fathers be brought to remembrance unto the Lord; and let not the sin against*¹⁵ *his mother be blotted out* (Ps. 109:14).¹⁶ Note that the verse does not say “the iniquity against his FATHER,” but *the iniquity against his FATHERS*. The wicked Esau, you will find, sinned not only against Israel, but committed great sins against others. He sinned against the Holy One, blessed be He,

12. See MTeh 32:3.

13. MT: *thou wast a stranger in his land*.

14. Amalek, to be sure, is a descendant of Edom who is not to be abhorred, but he is the most depraved of Edom's descendants.

15. JV: *of*.

16. The verse will be construed as referring to Esau, because a subsequent verse in the Psalm identifies the wicked man as the one *who did not want the blessing* (Ps. 109:17).

sinned against Israel, sinned against his brother, sinned against his father,¹⁷ sinned against Abraham. Hence Scripture, *Let the iniquity against his fathers be brought to remembrance*. He sinned in what ways? He sinned against the Holy One, blessed be He, by burning the Torah and burning the Temple.¹⁸ He sinned against Israel: he burned, slew, and banished. He sinned against his brother, with the threat *Let the days of mourning for my father be at hand; then will I slay my brother Jacob* (Gen. 27:41), so that Jacob had to flee from him. He sinned against his father¹⁷—he went and married idol-worshipping women who burned incense before the idols, and Isaac smelled the smoke, with the result that his eyes grew dim, as is said *and his eyes grew dim* (Gen. 27:1). He sinned against his grandfather Abraham to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, said, *But thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace* (Gen. 15:15): by right Abraham should have lived to a good old age and had his years prolonged, but because of the wicked Esau his days were shortened. For, as R. Abbahu said, at the age of fifteen Esau went out into the field and raped a betrothed maiden. He also committed a murder, as is intimated by *And Esau came in from the field*, etc. (Gen. 25:29). From the fact that the verse specifies Esau's coming in from *the field*, it is to be read in the light of another verse wherein *field* is also specified, the verse in Deuteronomy that states the penalty for rape: "If the man find the damsel that is betrothed in the field" (Deut. 22:25). Furthermore, the conclusion of the verse in Genesis that says of Esau *And he was faint* (Gen. 25:29), is to be read in the light of a verse in Jeremiah that makes out "fainting" to be typical of the soul of murderers: *Woe is me now, for my soul fainteth as [the soul of] murderers* (Jer. 4:31). The intimation then is that Esau was a rapist and a murderer, though, of course, direct proof is lacking.¹⁹ After Esau had done these two things, Abraham departed from this life [not knowing that

17. "his father"—FT; Parma MS and PE: "his mother."

18. Esau and Edom are synonymous (Gen. 36:1), and both terms stand for Rome.

19. "The intimation then . . . direct proof is lacking"—Parma MS.

Esau had done them]. Why? <Because the Holy One, blessed be He, declared:> I said, *Thou shalt go to thy fathers in peace; thou shalt be buried in a good old age* (Gen. 15:15). What sort of *good old age* would it have been for Abraham if he had known of his son's son uncovering by violence the nakedness of women and shedding blood? Therefore as soon as Esau had done these things, Abraham departed this life.²⁰

Thereupon, as Jacob sat cooking lentils, Esau came and asked: "What makes you sit and cook lentils?"²¹ Jacob replied: "Because my grandfather has died. And so I sit, mournful and grieving—he will know how I grieved for him, and when the dead are resurrected in the time-to-come he will think kindly of me." Esau said: "Fool, think you thus? After a man dies and moulders in the grave, how can he live again?" Thus he denied the resurrection of the dead: *Behold, I am going to die [and moulder in the grave]* (Gen. 25:32). He went on to say, "Moreover, as for the birthright which you think has something of value, give me another²² bowlful of these lentils and I shall give the birthright to you." *Then Jacob gave Esau bread and [another] bowlful of lentils . . . Thus Esau despised his birthright* (Gen. 25:34). No sooner had he sold it, than he set about²³ seeking to slay his brother. He complained to his father: *Is not he rightly named Jacob (supplanter)? . . . He took away my birthright!* (Gen. 27:36). Rebekah sensed that Esau was hostile to Jacob and said to Jacob: *Now therefore, my son, hearken to my voice; and arise, flee thou* (Gen. 27:43). Hence Jacob rose up, left his father and his mother, and on account of Esau went into exile in places which he knew not, spending twenty-two years far away from his father's home.

Thus you find that even as Esau sinned against his father²⁴ and against his grandfather, so he sinned also against his brother.

20. Isaac lived 180 years, Abraham only 175. See Rashi on Gen. 25:30.

21. Lentils, being round, symbolize the cycles of life and death.

22. "another"—Parma MS; PE: "one."

23. "No sooner had he sold it, than he set about," etc.—Parma MS; PE: "So he set about," etc.

24. "his father"—FT; Parma MS and PE: "his mother."

Hence David said: *Let the iniquity against his fathers be brought to remembrance.*

And let not the sin against his mother be blotted out. What is meant by the *sin against his mother*? R. Judah said: When Esau left the belly of his mother, he ripped her womb: *Thus saith the Lord: For three transgressions of Edom, etc., and did destroy the womb whence he came*²⁵ (Amos 1:11). R. Nehemiah said: <[The sin against his mother was] his having brought it about that she was not to become the mother of the twelve Fathers of the Tribes.²⁶ Our Masters said:> What was the *sin against his mother*? That because of him her body, when she died, had to be taken out at night. Indeed she herself asked that this be done, saying: My son, the righteous Jacob, is not here. My husband, the righteous Isaac, stays at home because his eyes are grown dim. If I be taken out during the day²⁷ with this wicked one walking before my bier, it will be said, "Alas for the breast that gave suck to such a one." Therefore she commanded that her body be taken out at night, although usually, when Matriarchs died, their bodies were taken out during the day, they were given a public funeral, and all came and accorded them loving reverence. Because the body of this matriarch was taken out at night, Scripture, as R. Jose ben Hanina used to say, does not record her death as it records the death of Sarah, of whom it is said *And Sarah died* (Gen. 23:1). Instead Scripture records that *Deborah, Rebekah's nurse, died* (Gen. 35:8), thus by indirection making it known through the death of Deborah that Rebekah's death had already occurred.²⁸ R. Abbahu²⁹ added in

25. So literally; JV: *and did cast off all pity.*

26. A privilege which because of her virtue and piety she deserved.

27. "If I be taken out during the day," etc.—Parma MS; PE: "If he should take me out during the day," etc.

28. The verse in Genesis goes on to say of Deborah that "she was buried below Beth-el under the oak, and the name of it was called *Allon-bacuth*," a place name which does not occur elsewhere. Such names, in Rabbinic commentary, are always interpreted as conveying a meaning beyond the merely topographical sense; and so *Allon-bacuth* is assumed to be a hybrid Graeco-Hebrew word, *Allon* meaning "other" in Greek and *bacuth* "weeping" in Hebrew. Hence "another occasion for weeping," the first occasion being the death of Rebekah, news of which had just then reached Jacob. See Gen. Rabbah 81, end.

29. "R. Abbahu"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Abba."

the name of R. Jose ben Ḥanina: Because no public funeral was given to Rebekah as to the other Matriarchs, her death was not a matter of public record, and thus Scripture did not make it a matter of public record. [Whatever Esau's sin against his mother was, Scripture says], *Let not the sin against his mother be blotted out*, that is, remember the sin against his mother.

Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, said: All had ample cause to requite Esau with all kinds of evil. His father had ample cause to requite him with all kinds of evil. His mother had ample cause to requite him with all kinds of evil. His grandfather had ample cause to requite him with all kinds of evil. His brother had ample cause to requite him with all kinds of evil. And I have ample cause to requite him with all kinds of evil for what he did with My House. Remember him that ye may blot out his name from the world: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee . . . thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek*.

5. Another comment: *Remember*. This exhortation is to be considered in the light of the verse *Thou hast rebuked the nations, Thou hast destroyed the wicked, Thou wouldst blot out their name for ever and ever* (Ps. 9:6). *Thou hast rebuked the nations*, that is, the [heathen] nations who at all times devise evil counsel which the Holy One, blessed be He, brings to nothing. *Thou hast destroyed the wicked*, the wicked Haman who was a survivor of the seed of Amalek and sought to exterminate Israel. *Thou wouldst blot out their name for ever and ever*, and hence Thou hast commanded: "thou shalt blot out the name of Amalek" (Deut. 25:19).

Remember what Amalek did unto thee (Deut. 25:17)—[remember the evil he intended to inflict, so that to avert the evil]³⁰ *Moses said unto Joshua: "Choose us out men"* (Exod. 17:9). From his use of *us* and not "me" it follows that a man is required to accord as much honor to his disciples as to his equals.

30. Here there may be a lacuna wherein *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* was linked with the verse *Then came Amalek and fought with Israel* (Exod. 17:8).

By *men*³¹ is meant righteous men, the kind of men referred to in the verse "But there remained two men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad" (Num. 11:26).³²

Or, by *men* is more likely meant men of valor. *And go out, fight with Amalek tomorrow*;³³ *I will stand on the top of the hill* (Exod. 17:9). Moses said to Joshua: Go and fight Amalek, and I will stand on the top of the hill? Moses' meaning here can be explained, as R. Isaac used to say, by the parable of bandits who were about to invade a city. Even as the soldiers went forth to fight against them, a widow's son who was there said: Let me go up to the roof top and I shall stand looking on while you fight. [The widow of the parable is Israel; her son is Moses. Israel's loss of trust in God at Rephidim, the site of the battle with Amalek,³⁴ enfeebled her and her son Moses, as loss of a husband enfeebles a family. Moses' feebleness, intimated in the name Rephidim, which is compounded of *rph*, "feeble," and *ydy*, "hands," meant that he could not fight against Amalek with Joshua—he could only stand and watch the battle].³⁵ Thus he said: *Go out, fight . . . I will stand on the top of the hill*.

In another comment, [the words *I will stand on the top of the hill*, etc., are construed not as having been spoken by Moses but rather as Israel's prayer to God in which Israel, during the fight

31. The intimation may be found in the word, *Choose*, that is, "select," or else in the term *'niym*, "men of high degree."

32. In their humility, these two hid, deeming themselves unworthy of appointment as elders and of going into the Tabernacle to receive the holy spirit. See Sif Num. 95; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3, 251-53.

33. IV: *fight with Amalek; tomorrow I will stand*. The word *tomorrow* is one of five instances in Scripture where it is uncertain whether a word should be linked with what precedes or with what follows in the verse, since both possibilities yield good sense. See Mek, 2, 142.

34. Just before Amalek attacked Israel, the children of Israel murmured against Moses because they had no water, and finally, in an outburst of distrust of God Himself, asked: *Is the Lord among us, or not?* (Exod. 17:7).

35. The Rabbis, aghast at the idea of spelling out in full the implications of the parable of the widow, stopped short and left it to their readers to draw the pertinent implications. Since a modern reader is not likely to fill in the deliberate lacuna, I have added the long interpolation. Cf. Mek, 2, 139.

against Amalek, invoked the merits which were theirs. And so] the words are read literally, *And I Myself stand up*. Note that Scripture does not use here the word 'ny ("I"), but 'nky ("I Myself"), intimating therefore that Israel invoked the merit of Torah, the merit of the first word of the Ten Commandments which is 'nky.³⁶ The phrase *stand up*, which follows, intimates that Israel invoked the merit of the judges,³⁷ for the Lord Himself as judge is described as standing up: "The Lord standeth up to plead, and standeth to judge the people" (Isa 3:13). The next term, *top*, intimates that Israel invoked the merit of the Patriarchs: "From the peaks of the rocks I see him" (Num. 23:9), [for the merit of the Patriarchs is topmost in Israel]. The following term, *hill*, intimates that Israel invoked the merit of the Matriarchs: "And from the hills I behold him" (*ibid.*), [for the merit of the Matriarchs towers only a little less high than that of the Patriarchs].³⁸ The phrase *with the rod* is an allusion to Moses' own merit, for the verse goes on to describe the rod as the one of God, *that was given because of me* [—Moses].³⁹ Thus Israel finally prayed: Oh that we stand our ground through the merit of Moses! Why [did Israel deem it necessary in the battle against Amalek to invoke the merit of Moses as well as the other merits?] Because they said: As we come before God pleading the merit of the Fathers, so Amalek, of the progeny of Esau, may also come [pleading] the merit of the Fathers.⁴⁰

Another comment: Why did Moses say to Joshua *Go out*,

36. See Exod. 20:1. The more usual form for "I" is 'ny.

37. "the merit of the judges"—Parma MS; PE: "the merit of the judicial system [governing civil and capital cases]."

38. Balaam, who spoke these words, implied that from the very beginnings of Israel's history, from the time of the Patriarchs towering like the peaks of the rocks, from the time of the Matriarchs only a little less high, great things might rightly have been expected to come out of him—out of Israel. See Rashi on Num. 23:9.

39. JV: ". . . of God that was in my hand."

40. Esau could plead the merit of Isaac his father, and of Abraham his grandfather. In line with the interpretation of Exod. 17:9 as Israel's prayer during the battle with Amalek, Exod. 17:11 would be construed: "*When that which was given through the merit of Moses rose, Israel prevailed.*"

fight?⁴¹ Because at the time of which it is written *Amalek . . . met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, all that were enfeebled in thy rear . . . for he feared not God* (Deut. 25:18), the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Joseph declared *I fear God* (Gen. 42:18), but this one, Amalek, of him Scripture states *he feared not God* (Deut. 25:18). And so let Joshua, a son of a son of Joseph who feared God, come and requite Amalek who did not fear Him: *How he met thee . . . when thou wast faint and weary; for he feared not God (ibid.)*.⁴²

Another comment: Why was Esau to fall at the hand of Joseph?⁴³ Because Joseph was the least in years, being *the son of . . . old age* (Gen. 37:3), while of Esau it is said *Behold, I have made thee least among the nations* (Ob. 1:2). Let Esau, whom I call "least," be made to come and fall at the hand of Joseph who was least in years.⁴⁴

Another comment: All the other Tribes took part in the sale of Joseph. Therefore not one of them could join battle with Esau, because their own hands were not clean enough for them to confront Esau in the give and take of combat.

Another comment: Though Esau was the first-born, he forfeited his birthright on account of his evil deeds; and though Joseph was the youngest, he gained the birthright on account of his good deeds. And so let Joseph who gained the birthright on account of his good deeds come and requite Esau who, though a first-born, forfeited his birthright on account of his evil deeds.⁴⁵

Another comment: Joseph professed his belief in afterlife for

41. The words "Because Joshua was one of Rachel's children's children," which occur at this point in PE and in Parma MS, are deleted.

42. "the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: . . . *for he feared not God*"—Parma MS.

43. Amalek fell at the hand of Joshua of the Tribe of Ephraim, and fell again at the hand of Saul, a Benjamite. Haman fell at the hand of Mordecai, also a Benjamite.

44. Jer. 49:20: *Hear ye the counsel of the Lord . . . against Edom. Surely the least of the flock shall drag them away.* Cf. Gen. Rabbah 73:7; and PRKB, 28a.

45. "And so let Joseph who gained the birthright . . . on account of his evil deeds"—Parma MS. PE: "Let his good deeds come and requite Esau who forfeited his birthright with evil deeds."

the dead, saying *God will surely remember you*⁴⁶ (Exod. 13:19). But Esau denied afterlife for the dead, saying, *Behold, I am going to die*, etc. (Gen. 25:32). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph who professed his belief in afterlife for the dead come and requite Esau who denied afterlife for the dead.

Another comment: Though Joseph grew up with two wicked people, with Potiphar and his wife,⁴⁷ he did not learn wickedness from their deeds. Though Esau grew up with two righteous people, he did not learn righteousness from their deeds. And so the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph, who grew up with two wicked men, but did not learn wickedness from their deeds, come and requite Esau, who did not learn righteousness from the deeds of the righteous.

Another comment: Joseph paid back⁴⁸ his brothers good for evil, while Esau paid back evil for good.⁴⁹ The Holy One, blessed be He said: Let Joseph come, etc.

Another comment: Joseph offered his life for his mother's honor, while Esau sought to slay his mother, for at his going forth [from his mother's belly] he ripped her womb: *Because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did destroy the womb whence he came*⁵⁰ (Amos 1:11). And so the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph who offered his life for his mother's honor come and punish Esau who sought to slay his mother.

And where in Scripture do we find of Joseph that he offered his life for his mother's honor? In the passage where Scripture says that Jacob returned to go to his father's house. As he was about to meet Esau, what did he do? He had his children and the Matriarchs go ahead of him, and had each matriarch, each

46. See Mek, 1, 182, where the comment on *God will surely remember you* is: "He will remember you in this world and He will also remember you in the world-to-come." The infinitive absolute *pkwd*, which is interpreted as indicating another act besides the one stated in the finite verb, provides the basis for this comment.

47. "his wife"—Parma MS; FT interpolates: "Pharaoh."

48. "Joseph paid back"—Parma MS; PE: "Let Joseph come who paid back."

49. See 2 Chron. 20:10-11.

50. So literally; JV: *and did cast off all pity*.

one followed by her children, pass by and bow down before Esau, as is said *Then the handmaids came near, with their*⁵¹ *children, and they bowed down. And Leah also and her children came near, and bowed down* (Gen. 33:6-7). But note what is written of Rachel: *And after came Joseph near and Rachel* (*ibid.*)—not “Rachel and Joseph,”⁵² but *Joseph . . . and Rachel*. Why so? Because, saying to himself: “No woman is as beautiful as my mother—and this wicked Esau is suspected of lecherous doings,” Joseph put himself ahead of his mother, standing in front of her so that Esau should not see her. With regard to this act, Joseph’s father praised him: *A son to be rewarded is Joseph, a son to be rewarded because of the eye*⁵³ (Gen. 49:22). What can the expression *because of the eye* mean? It means that Jacob said: Because you did veil the eye of that wicked one from your mother.

Another comment: Esau besmeared himself with lechery and murder, even as R. Abbahu expounded: “At the age of fifteen,” etc.⁵⁴ But Joseph guarded himself against lechery,⁵⁵ and against murder. Against lechery: *But he refused, and said unto his master’s wife, etc.* (Gen. 38:8); and against murder, as is said *As for you, ye meant evil against me; but God meant it for good* (Gen. 50:20).⁵⁶ And therefore let this Esau fall at the hand of Joseph.

Another comment: Esau sought to slay his brother: *Because he did pursue his brother with the sword* (Amos 1:11). But Joseph comforted his brothers, fed them, and sustained them: *And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them, “I will sustain you”* (Gen. 50:21). Therefore let the former fall at the hand of the latter.

Another comment: Of Amalek Scripture writes: *For he feared*

51. “with their”—PR; MT: “they and their.”

52. “bowed down” deleted, as in Parma MS.

53. JV: *Joseph is a fruitful vine, a fruitful vine by a fountain*. But in this comment, *pr̥* is understood as derived not from *pr̥y*, “fruit,” but from *pr̥*, “pay back”; and *ʿyn* not in the sense of “fountain,” but “eye.” See Gen. Rabbah 78:10, and Strashun’s Novellae.

54. See Piska 12.4.

55. “lechery”—Parma Ms; PE: “sins [of the body].”

56. Cf. Mek, 1, 179–80.

not God (Deut. 25:17); but of Joseph Scripture writes: *For I fear God* (Gen. 42:18). Let Joseph who feared God come and requite Esau who did not fear God.⁵⁷

6. R. Joshua ben Levi said: In the time-to-come, [standing before God's tribunal in heaven], princely counterparts of the Tribes of Israel will debate with the princely counterpart of Esau, but he will not be overborne by their arguments. When the princely counterpart of Joseph, however, comes and joins the debate against him, he will be overborne at once by the other's arguments. Why? Because when each of the other princely counterparts of the Tribes comes to debate with Esau, Esau will brush him aside at once with rebuttal of his arguments. To Reuben he will say: You were suspected with regard to your father's wife. To Simeon and Levi he will say: As for you, you slew Shechem. And to Judah he will say: As for you, you were suspected with regard to your daughter-in-law.⁵⁸ And all the other Tribes he will dispose of by saying: You sold your brother. But when the princely counterpart of Joseph comes to join the debate, the princely counterpart of Esau will be overborne at once by his arguments; he will have no rebuttal for him: *And the house of Jacob shall be a fire, and the house of Joseph a flame* (Ob. 1:18). And the text goes on to say, *And they shall kindle in them, and devour them; and there shall not be any remaining of the house of Esau* (*ibid.*). [And elsewhere, concerning the Chaldeans], *Behold, they shall be as stubble; the fire shall burn them; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame* (Isa. 47:14). In the give and take of debate the prince of Esau will be equal to the princes of all the other Tribes; but against Joseph, the prince of Esau and his cohorts will not be able to deliver themselves by arguments, and so will not escape⁵⁹ from the power of Gehenna's flames.⁶⁰

57. "Let Joseph who feared God . . . Esau who did not fear God"—Parma MS.

58. See Gen. 35:22, 34:25, and 38:16.

59. "by arguments, and so will not escape"—Parma MS.

60. See Gen. Rabbah 73:6, and Targum Jonathan on Gen. 30:25.

7. *And Moses said unto Joshua: "Choose us out men," etc., etc. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Adonai-nissai*⁶¹ (Exod. 17:9-15). The text does not say *nissenu*, "miracles wrought for our sake," but *Adonai-nissai* "My miracles are the Lord's"—that is, the miracles were wrought for His name's sake.

In another comment, the expression read *Adonai-nissi* is taken to mean *The Lord is my banner*. That is, Moses said: Thou art my banner (*nes*), even as I am the banner of Thy children.

Or the expression *Adonai-nissi* is taken to mean that God raised them up high like the flag (*nes*) of a ship.

Or again: *Adonai nissi* ("The Lord—miracle [*nes*] for me"). R. Joshua the Priest son of R. Nehemiah said: This reading may be explained by the parable of a king whose wife provoked him, so that he became angry at her. Whereupon he went down to the market place, entered a goldsmith's shop, and had a piece of jewelry made for her. Now if he had jewelry made for her when she provoked him, how much more and more would he do for her if she did his will! So, too, if He performed miracles for Israel—*Adonai nissi* ("The Lord—miracle for me")—at a time when they provoked Him (*Is the Lord among us, or not?* [Exod. 17:7]), how much more and more will He do for them if they do His will!

8. *But Moses' hands were heavy* (Exod. 17:12). R. Joshua said: The hands of Moses were weighted down by the multitude of Israel's sins, for Israel had said mistrustfully: *Is the Lord among us, or not?* (Exod. 17:7). Indeed, as R. Abbahu explained, Moses's hands were as heavy as though two weighty jugs of water hung on them.⁶²

According to R. Berechiah the Priest who cited R. Abba,⁶³ the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Moses' hands weigh heavily

61. "*nissai*," so apparently in PR; MT: "*nissi*." See Mek, 2, 159.

62. "weighty . . . water" is an attempt to match the pun of the original *kbdym*, "heavy," and *kdyd il mym*, "jugs of water." The allusion may be to the incident at Rephidim, where the children of Israel grew loud in their complaints against Moses because there was no water to drink.

63. "who cited R. Abba"—Parma MS; PE: "Berabbi."

with Me. They received the Torah, they received the Tables of the Covenant, they received the Ten Commandments,⁶⁴ they brought ten plagues upon Pharaoh, they divided the Red Sea, then led Israel into it.⁶⁵

But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon (Exod. 17:12). Was there no cushion, [were there] no luxurious bolsters to put under Moses? Nothing other than a stone? R. Aḥa said: That he sat on a stone makes it known to you that when Israel are in trouble their great men share the trouble with them.⁶⁶

And Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands (*ibid.*)—Aaron with the merit of priesthood, and Hur with the merit of kingship.⁶⁷

The one on the one side, and the other on the other side (*ibid.*)—with the merit of the Ten Commandments, of which it is said "On the one side and on the other were they written" (Exod. 32:15).

*And it was because of his hands, a bringing up*⁶⁸ (Exod. 17:12). What is meant by *a bringing up*? Before this question is answered, note that because of Moses' merit, because of the pain his hands suffered from being held up so long in prayer, Amalek fell before Israel. Amalek's sun did not go down altogether, however, for a remnant of his seed was left.⁶⁹ And when is his sun to go down altogether, that is, the last of his line crushed and his seed rooted out of the world? When *a bringing up* will have taken place, that is, when Esther who was brought up to trust God—*And he brought up*⁷⁰ *Hadassah* (Esther 2:7)—

64. The two sets, the ones that he broke when he saw the golden calf, and the second set. See Exod. 32:19 and 34:27.

65. "then led Israel into it"—Parma MS; PE: "and led Israel."

66. See B.Ta 11a.

67. Hur was a descendant of the Tribe of Judah, out of which David's dynasty was to come. See 1 Chron. 2:19, and Exod. Rabbah 1:17.

68. JV: *and his hands were steady*.

69. The words "And when will his sun go down altogether and a remnant of his seed be left," which follow in P, are deleted as a dittography.

70. The word 'omen, "brought up," in Esther 2:7 is linked with 'emunah, rendered in Exod. 17:12 "a bringing up," but generally meaning "trust in God." And so the statement in Scripture that Mordecai brought up Esther is understood as meaning that he brought her up to trust God.

will have come. Hence it is written *And it was because of his hands, a bringing up until the going down of the sun*. What is implied by the words *until the going down of the sun*? Not until Esther arrives in the world, she who will have been brought up to trust God, will Amalek's sun go down.

<And Joshua prostrated Amalek and his people (Exod. 17:13).> The text does not say that Joshua went so far as to root them up entirely, but *Joshua prostrated Amalek*, so that he was like one who, though prostrated by feebleness, nevertheless remains alive.

9. *And he said: "The hand upon the throne of the Lord"* (Exod. 17:16). R. Eliezer ben Jacob said: The Holy One, blessed be He, swore by His throne that He would receive no proselyte from the seed of Amalek. Therefore, when he who brought tidings of the death of Saul and Jonathan came to David, who asked him: *Who art thou?* (2 Sam. 1:13)⁷¹ and he replied: *I am the son of an Amalekite proselyte*,⁷² David would not receive him. For, according to R. Isaac, he who brought the tidings was the son of⁷³ Doeg the Edomite.

Another comment: *The hand upon the throne of the Lord*. R. Abba bar Kahana said: As long as the seed of Amalek endures it is as though—if one dare speak thus—God's face is hidden, but when Amalek's seed will be rooted out of the world, the Face—hidden, if one may venture to say such a thing—will be visible: *Yet shall not thy Teacher hide Himself any more, but thine eyes shall see thy Teacher* (Isa. 30:20).

In another comment, the words are read *Because there is a hand against the throne of the Lord* (Exod. 17:16). R. Joshua ben Levi said in the name of R. Alexandros: When Amalek put forth his hands against the throne of the Holy One, blessed be He, that is, against Jerusalem,⁷⁴ of which it is said *Jerusalem*

71. MT: *Whence art thou?*

72. JV: *stranger*. However, in Rabbinic Hebrew *stranger* is taken to mean "proselyte."

73. "the son of"—Tanhuma, *Ki ʿeše'*, end.

74. "that is, against Jerusalem"—Parma MS.

shall be the throne of the Lord (Jer. 3:17), he was at once doomed to being rooted out of the world. One verse says, *The Lord will have war with Amalek* (Exod. 17:16); and another verse says, *That thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Deut. 25:19). How are the two verses to be reconciled? ⁷⁵ Before he put forth his hand against Jerusalem, [Scripture says,] *Thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek*; but after he put forth his hand, *The Lord will have war with Amalek*.

Another comment: *Because there is a hand against the throne of the Lor'* ⁷⁶ (Exod. 17:16). The text does not say "Lord" but *Lor'*. R. Levi said in the name of R. Ḥama the son of R. Ḥanina: If one dare say such a thing, the name of God will not be complete and the throne of the Lord will not be whole as long as Amalek's seed is in the world; but when Amalek's seed will have been rooted out, the throne of the Lord will be whole and the name of God complete. David said: *The destructions of the enemy are come to a perpetual end, and their cities Thou didst uproot, their very memorial is perished* (Ps. 9:7). What does the text at once go on to say? *The Lord is enthroned; He hath prepared His throne for judgment* ⁷⁷ (Ps. 9:8).

10. Another comment: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 25:17). R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse by quoting the verse *Render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom their reproach, wherewith they have reproached Thee, O Lord* (Ps. 79:12). Jeremiah said: *Thou wilt render unto them a requital, O Lord, according to the work of their hands* (Lam. 3:64), as against David's *Render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom*. R. Judah and R. Nehemiah differed in their explanations. According to R. Judah, Israel said: Master

75. "How are the two verses to be reconciled?"—Parma MS.

76. The defective spelling of the words "throne" and "Lord" is an attempt to reproduce in English the defective Hebrew: the words which should be written *kisse' Yhwh* are written defectively *kes Yah*.

77. Cf. MTeh 9:10, where R. Levi's statement ends with the words: "Here, behold, the Name is complete, and the throne is whole." That is, the spelling is no longer defective, the Hebrew words for *Lord* and *throne* being given in full.

of the universe, requite them *according to the work of their hands* for what they did to us; but *render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom* for that vileness which they did in Thy Sanctuary. That the Sanctuary is referred to by the word *bosom* is plain, as R. Huna⁷⁸ taught, from the verse that speaks of the Sanctuary as the earth's bosom, "from the bosom of the earth⁷⁹ to the lower settle" (Ezek. 43:14).⁸⁰ According to R. Nehemiah, Israel said: Master of the universe, *render unto them a requital, O Lord, according to the work of their hands* for what they did to us, but *render unto our neighbors sevenfold into their bosom* because they burned Thy Torah, which Scripture says was "purified seven times" (Ps. 12:7). R. Hanina ben Shallum and R. Joshua of Sighin said in the name of R. Levi:⁸¹ The expression *into their bosom their reproach* informs us that Amalek would sever from Israelites' bodies the circumcised organ set in a man's middle—in his bosom, so to speak—and would fling it toward heaven hurling reproaches and blasphemies toward Him above, saying: "Is this what Thou desirest? Behold it thrown aloft to Thee, into Thy very face."⁸² And where do you learn that the Amalekites acted thus? From what is written in the preceding passage: *And putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secret parts* (Deut. 25:11). And what follows? *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 25:17).

11. Another comment: *Remember*. Our Masters from the South, citing R. Samuel, began their discourse with the portion, *Knewest thou not, heardest thou not?*⁸³ *Yea, from of old was not thine ear opened? For I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously, O transgressor from the womb, for thee a beam of*

78. "R. Huna"—Parma MS and PRKB, 25b; PE: "R. Shuna."

79. JV: *from the bottom upon the ground*.

80. R. Huna reads the verse in Psalms, "sevenfold for what they did to the earth's bosom—to the Sanctuary located at the center of the earth."

81. "R. Levi"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Joshua the son of Levi."

82. See Piska 7.3.

83. MT: *Yea, thou heardest not; yea, thou knewest not*.

*the gallows*⁸⁴ (Isa. 48:8). These words are addressed to Amalek as well as to Haman who came from the loins of Amalek. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Haman:⁸⁵ O most wicked one of the world! Thou didst join battle against My children. *Knewest thou not* of the miracles which I did for them in Egypt, as is written "And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord" (Exod. 14:4)? *Yea, heardest thou not* of the miracles which I did for them at the Red Sea: "The peoples have heard, they tremble" (Exod. 15:14)? *Yea, from of old, was not thine ear opened?* Have not thine ears heard the song which My children sang for Me at the Red Sea? "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song" (Exod. 15:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say: Thou knewest and thou heardest. But thou art stiff-necked: *For I knew that thou wouldst deal very treacherously.* And stiff-necked thou hast been not as of now, but from thy mother's womb—a *transgressor from the womb*. However, as thou livest, there will be given thee someone who will teach thee a lesson.⁸⁶ And what lesson am I preparing for thee? A call to the gallows (*ḵwrh*), as is said *for thee a beam of the gallows*.⁸⁷ This, so R. [Samuel] concluded, was to be fifty cubits high. And the proof? The words *ḵwr' lk*, "for thee a beam of the gallows," in which the letter "l" represents thirty and the letter "k" twenty, fifty cubits in all. Hence, O Haman, *Remember what Amalek accomplished—fifty—for thee*.⁸⁸

12. Another comment: *Remember*. R. Berechiah Berabbi said: What parable is appropriate here? That of a king who had an orchard, and who also had a dog which sat guarding the orchard. When the son of the king's friend came to steal from the orchard, the dog set upon him and bit him. Thereupon, whenever the king wished to remind the friend's son of his attempt to steal

84. JV: *and wast called*. But see below at the end of the comment.

85. "to Haman"—Parma MS.

86. The teacher being Mordecai.

87. "call . . . gallows" is an attempt to match the pun in the Hebrew of *ḵwr*, "called," and *ḵwrh*, "beam [of a gallows]."

88. In the conclusion the commentator construes *lk*, "unto thee," as though referring to Haman's gallows which were 50 cubits high.

from the orchard, he would say: ⁸⁹ Remember what the dog did to you!

Even so when Israel sinned in Rephidim, saying, *Is the Lord among us, or not?* (Exod. 17:7), at once the dog came and bit them. The dog was Amalek, of whom it is said *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim* (Exod. 17:8). And when the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to remind Israel of the sin they sinned in Rephidim, He would say, Remember that Amalek who set upon you: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee!*

13. *How he met thee (kṛḳ) by the way* (Deut. 25:18). R. Judah, R. Nehemiah, and our Masters differed in their comments.⁹⁰ R. Judah read this verse: *How he read up on thee (kṛ'ḳ) in records that go away back (bdrḳ).*⁹¹ What did the wicked Amalek do? Out of Egypt he took ⁹² the genealogical record containing the names of Israel. Then stationing himself just beyond the clouds of glory surrounding Israel's encampment, he would read out to each and every Israelite his exact name, and say, "So-and-so, son of So-and-so, come forth, because I desire to transact a matter of business with you." When the Israelite went forth, Amalek slew him. Such was the scheme that Amalek had in mind when he *read up on thee*.

And R. Nehemiah read the verse: *How he took advantage of the mischance which befell thee (kṛḳ)*, the mischance of thy nocturnal emission of semen which required thee to leave the camp—*Any man that is not clean by reason of that which mis-*

89. So Parma MS; PE: "Thereupon the king, entreating his son not to remind the friend's son that he wished to steal from his orchard, suggested that he merely say to him."

90. *How he met thee by the way* appears to imply that Amalek's coming upon Israel was accidental. That there was anything fortuitous or accidental in Amalek's attack upon Israel is regarded by the three commentators as inconceivable. Hence their comments which follow.

91. "*records . . . away back*" is an attempt to match the pun in the Hebrew of *bdrḳ*, "away," and *bd'rky*, "records" or "archives."

92. "took"—ZA, parallels in PRKB, 27a, and Tanḥuma, *Ki ṭeṣe'*, 9.

*chanceth him (mḵrḥ)*⁹³ *by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp* (Deut. 23:11)—and thus gave Amalek the opportunity to seize thee and pollute thee by pederasty.

And our Masters read the verse: *How he cooled (ḵyrḵ) thee*. Amalek made thee lukewarm, made thee like water that has cooled off, *ḵyrḵ* meaning "cooled off," this sense of the word being derived from *ḵr* ("cool"), as in the verse *As cool (ḵr) waters to a faint soul* (Prov. 25:25). R. Huna said: What parable is appropriate here? That of a pool of scalding water, at first so hot that every one drew back from it. One man came, jumped into it, and made it lukewarm. Thereupon everyone came and bathed in it. So Israel. When they went forth out of Egypt, the nations drew back in fear from them: *The peoples have heard, they tremble; pangs have taken hold* (Exod. 15:14). But Amalek came and made Israel appear lukewarm.

*<How he . . . smote thee in the nether parts*⁹⁴ (Deut. 25:18).> What is meant by the words *smote thee in the nether parts*? It is a euphemism for mutilation by cutting off the male parts, as you may learn from the Book of Samuel: *And Samuel cut Agag's parts* (1 Sam. 15:33). This verse, according to R. Isaac, means that Samuel castrated Agag, saying to him: "*As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be without grandchildren among women* (*ibid.*) When you castrated an Israelite, you caused his wife to be bound to a dry stick. As you did to Israel in the wilderness,⁹⁵ so have I done to you."

Another comment: *And . . . cut . . . apart*, which, according to R. Abba bar Kahana, means that Samuel cut Agag's body apart into olive-size pieces and fed them to ostriches: *The members of his body shall be devoured, yea, the first-born of death shall devour his members* (Job 18:13).⁹⁶ What else can the ex-

93. *Mḵrḥ* is understood as a form of *ḵry*, a word which means "the mischance of nocturnal emission."

94. JV: *How he . . . smote thee hindmost of thee*.

95. "in the wilderness"—Parma MS; PE: "in Egypt."

96. The commentator finds in this chapter an intimation of Agag's fate, because the entire chapter describes the punishment of the wicked, and verse 17

pression *the first-born of death* mean⁹⁷ except that Samuel devised a kind of death first⁹⁸ in the degree of its cruelty?

R. Levi said: What is really meant by the verb *šsf*⁹⁹ is that Samuel fixed four pikes in the ground and tied Agag's hands and feet to them, so as to spread-eagle him, a form of death hinted at in Agag's saying *Surely the most bitter of deaths is at hand* (1 Sam. 15:32), where the word *sr*, "is at hand," spelled with a *samek*, also comes close to the verb *srs*, "to spread-eagle."¹⁰⁰

But our Masters, reading the word *sr* as though spelled with a *šin*, "prince,"¹⁰¹ take Agag to be asking Samuel: "Is a prince to be put to death in such a way¹⁰²—by castration? [In your country is this how you execute a prince?]" Samuel replied: "[Yes, a very prince of death for such a prince as thou], *As thy sword hath made women childless*" (1 Sam. 15:33).¹⁰³

All that were enfeebled in thy rear (Deut. 25:18). Who were those smitten by Amalek and referred to in the text as *enfeebled*?¹⁰⁴ R. Judah and R. Nehemiah differ in their answers. One said: They were all those from whom the cloud¹⁰⁵ [of glory that sheltered Israel] withdrew, so that they faltered.¹⁰⁶

declares *His remembrance*—a phrase linked with Amalek—*shall perish from the earth*. See PRKM, p. 45.

97. "What else can the expression *the first-born of death* mean?"—Parma MS.

98. In this comment, Agag would be understood as saying, *Surely the lord of deaths is at hand* (1 Sam. 15:32). *Mar*, generally rendered "bitterness," means in Aramaic "lord," "prime," "first."

99. Previously rendered *cut apart*. The verb is a *hapax legomenon*.

100. [Literally "to castrate, mutilate." L. N.]

101. "reading the word *sr* as though spelled with a *šin*, 'prince' "—Parma MS.

102. They understand '*kn*,' "surely," as the interrogative particle *hkn*, "Is . . . in such a way?"

103. A comment cited in support of R. Isaac's interpretation.

104. "Who were those . . . *enfeebled*?"—Parma MS.

105. Under the shelter of the cloud which enveloped the children of Israel they were as well fortified as a city that is surrounded by a solid wall. However, the cloud covered only those who were pure (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3, 57; and 6, 24). The comment which precedes and the two that follow identify respectively the *enfeebled in thy rear* as inadvertent sinners, deliberate sinners, or the Danites who were confirmed idolaters (see Piskas 11:3 and 46:3).

106. *Nhlym*, "enfeebled," is thus taken to be made up of the words *nh*, "withdrew from," and *il*, "drop, falter." See Deut. 28:40 and 19:5.

And the other said: <They were all those whom the cloud flung out and struck down.¹⁰⁷ And our Masters taught:> The cloud flung out the Tribe of Dan who were idolaters, of whom it is said *They shall set forth at the rear by their standards* (Num. 2:31).

R. Isaac, reading the verse a little differently, asked: Who were those designated as *All that were enfeebled in Thy rear*? They were those who, following Thee feebly, raised a cry against the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: *Is the Lord among us, or not?* (Exod. 17:7).

When thou wast faint, and he feared not God (Deut. 25:18). R. Tanhuma Berabbi, summing up his discourse, gave five reasons why Joshua, a grandson of the righteous Joseph, joined battle against Amalek, a descendant of Esau: (1) The one was called "the least" and the other was called "the least": Esau, *Behold, I make thee the least among the nations* (Ob. 1:2); and Joseph, *He was a lad* (Gen. 37:2). (2) The one grew up with two righteous people, with Isaac and Rebekah, and did not learn righteousness from their deeds; and the other grew up with two wicked people, with Pharaoh and Potiphar, and did not learn wickedness from their deeds. (3) Esau came seeking the sin of the body, but Joseph fled from the sin of the body. (4) Esau did an injury to his mother, as is said *He did destroy the womb whence he came* (Amos 1:11); but Joseph protected the honor of his mother, as is said *And after came Joseph near and Rachel* (Gen. 33:7).¹⁰⁸ (5) Joseph feared God, as is said *for I fear God* (Gen. 42:18); but the wicked Esau *feared not God* (Deut. 25:18).

Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about (Deut. 25:19). R. Azariah and R. Judah the son of Simon said in the name of R. Judah the son of R. Il'a'i: Upon their entrance into the Land, Israel were commanded three things—to set up a king over them, to build themselves the Temple, and to blot out the re-

107. *Nhšlym* is taken to mean those struck down by a *nhšl*, "a crushing wind."

108. See Piska 12.5.

membrance of Amalek, <That thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven (*ibid.*).> Israel spoke right out to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, Thou commandest us, Remember <to blot out> the remembrance of Amalek. But we are no more than flesh-and-blood—here for a little while. Thou, Thou who livest and endurest for ever and ever, do Thou remember. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: My children, you need only read every year the passage concerning Amalek, and I shall reckon it for you as though you were blotting out his name from the world.¹⁰⁹

R. Isaac said: We find that Joshua sought to blot out the remembrance of Amalek, as is said *And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword* (Exod. 17:13). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: As thou livest, some Amalekites are to remain. After thee, King Saul will rise out of Benjamin and pluck out by the root the last of Amalek's line, as is said, *Out of Ephraim came [Joshua], one who would have plucked them up, them of Amalek, by the roots;*¹¹⁰ *after thee, [O Joshua, Saul man of] Benjamin, with thy many soldiers* (Judg. 5:14).¹¹¹

109. See MTeh 137:8.

110. So apparently to be rendered; JV: *Out of Ephraim came they whose root is in Amalek.*

111. With the aid of 200,000 men, Saul, who was of the Tribe of Benjamin, set out to fight against Amalek. See 1 Sam. 15:4.

SUMMARY

The evil of Amalek as the consequence of Israel's heretical ways

The blessing said upon finishing the reading of the Scroll of Esther refers not to a single tyrant but to tyrants in general: Haman was only one in a line of such tyrants beginning with Amalek, every one of whom vilely set upon Israel. Such men as Joshua, Saul, Mordecai, all of them humble men of the Tribe descended from Rachel, are for ever held ready to punish Amalek (Sec. 1). In the time-to-come also, the earthly ruler and the king Messiah who will destroy Edom (Amalek) are both to be of Rachel's children and will thus be descended not from Jacob's haughty sons but from Jacob's humble sons (Sec. 2).

Why this choice? Because Joseph, a humble man, turned his brothers' hatred of him into love. God said therefore: Let Joseph who rooted hatred out of his heart come and requite Esau who kept his hatred in his heart (Sec. 3).

Because Jacob knew that Rachel's children were destined to exact punishment from Esau, he placed Rachel, after dividing his people into four companies, within the safest of all of them (Sec. 4).

Amalek's strength derives from Israel itself. Because of the heretical ways Israel had fallen into, as evident from the unforgivable question asked at Rephidim *Is the Lord among us?* (Exod. 17:7), Amalek was made the instrument by which Israel were purged of their sins. *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 25:17) is really a roundabout way of reminding Israel of their own misconduct (Sec. 6).

God let cruelty be the mode of His conduct toward Amalek because He knew there was no other way of dealing with him (Sec. 7). Because flesh-and-blood are likely to forget, God emphatically enjoins Israel to remember Amalek (Sec. 8).

*Out of Ephraim came [Joshua], one
who would pluck them up—them of Amalek—
by the roots; after thee, [O Joshua, Saul
man of] Benjamin, with thy many soldiers
(Judg. 5:14).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: What [blessing] shall a man say before reading the Scroll of Esther? In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim, our Masters taught us: When a man is about to read the Scroll, he says: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast hallowed us by Thy commandments, and hast given us the command concerning the reading of the Scroll of Esther."² And after finishing the Scroll, so R. Zechariah Ṭabbaḥa taught in the name of R. Johanan, he is required to say: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, O God who dost plead our cause, and avenge our wrong, Redeemer <and Savior> from the hand of tyrants.³ Blessed art Thou, O Lord, O God, the Savior."⁴

Why "tyrants" rather than "tyrant"? Because the plural is a remembrance of the salvation which the Holy One, blessed be He, wrought through Mordecai and Esther in the days of Haman, for when Haman sought to exterminate Israel, *to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish*, etc. (Esther 3:13), he was not alone in joining battle against Israel. Indeed Amalek, who was his ancestor, was the very first to set upon Israel when they went out of Egypt, as is said *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim* (Exod. 17:8). And what did

1. JV: *Out of Ephraim came they whose root is in Amalek; after thee, Benjamin, among thy peoples.*

At one time, according to Friedmann's note, part of Judg. 5 was read as the haftarah for the second Sabbath in the month of Adar. Cf. B.Meḡ 30a, where the haftarah for the second Sabbath in Adar is given as 1 Sam. 15.

2. Cf. the present form of blessing in APB, p. 276.

3. Parma MS: "who pleads thy cause, [O Israel] . . . avenges thy wrong . . . from the hand of him who tyrannized thee."

4. APB, p. 276.

the wicked Amalek do to them? R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: He severed from Israelites' bodies their male organs and threw these skyward, saying: "Is this what Thou desirest? Behold, it is given Thee." And whence do we know what he did? From the verse *And render unto our neighbors sevenfold because of what they had done to men's bosoms*⁵ (Ps. 79:12), that is, what they had done to the circumcised organ set in a man's middle—in his bosom, so to speak. The conclusion of the verse refers to Amalek's wicked words—the blasphemy, *wherewith they have blasphemed Thee, O Lord* (*ibid.*).⁶

It is Amalek's wicked act that Scripture speaks of in the verse *How he . . . smote thee in the nether parts*⁷ (Deut. 25:18), smote thee, that is, at the male organ.⁸

No sooner had the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Israel and said: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 25:17), than they replied: Master of the universe, Thou, Thou remember,⁹ as is said *Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem*¹⁰ (Ps. 137:7). The Holy One, blessed be He, told them: Do your part, *thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Deut. 25:19); and I shall do Mine, *I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Exod. 17:14). And no sooner did Saul become king, than the Holy One, blessed be He, said: The brood of Amalek will fall only at the hand of a descendant of Rachel, even as you find that at Rephidim, Amalek fell at the hand of Joshua, as is said, *And*

5. JV: *into their bosoms*. But the commentator, regarding the expression as seemingly superfluous, discerns in it an intimation of what the Amalekites had done.

6. The first part of Ps. 79 speaks of heathen who have come into God's inheritance, and who have given the dead bodies of God's servants to be food unto the fowls of the heaven.

7. JV: *How he . . . smote the hindmost of thee*.

8. See Piskas 7.3 and 12.10, 13.

9. "Master of the universe, Thou, Thou remember"—Parma MS; PE: "Do Thou remember."

10. That is, the conduct of the Edomites, ancestors of Amalek, on the fatal day of Jerusalem's fall, described previously in Ps. 79.

Joshua discomfited Amalek (Deut. 17:13). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: This Tribe, descended from Rachel, is held forever ready to punish Amalek. And the proof? The verse wherewith the lesson in the Prophets concludes: *Out of Ephraim came [Joshua], one who would pluck them up—them of Amalek—by the roots; after thee, [O Joshua, Saul man of] Benjamin, with thy many soldiers* (Judg. 5:14).¹¹

2. *Out of Ephraim*. R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: *And out of Jacob shall one have dominion, and shall destroy the remnant from the city [of Edom]* (Num. 24:19). What person is to have this dominion? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: An earthly ruler destined to arise out of Jacob shall have this dominion, and when he rises, he will *destroy the remnant from the city [of Edom]*.¹²

<Another comment:> What person is to have this dominion? The king Messiah who, it is said, *shall have dominion from sea to sea* (Ps. 72:8). [In these verses, the word *yrd* is taken as a form of the verb *rdh*, "have dominion"], as in the verse *For he had dominion (rwdh) in all the region on this side the River* (1 Kings 5:4). Accordingly, dominion is given into the hand of the wicked nation¹³ of Edom only until the Messiah comes, at which time one *out of Jacob . . . shall have dominion*.

In another comment, the verse is read *And out of Jacob one brought low*,¹⁴ etc. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Not one of Jacob's haughty sons, but one of Jacob's lowly sons shall destroy Edom. And the lowliest of all the Fathers of the Tribes and the least of all of them? Joseph and Benjamin. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Into the hand of Jacob's lowliest, into the hand of the least, I shall surrender the wicked nation. And

11. Both Ephraim and Benjamin traced their ancestry to Rachel; Gen. 30:24, 35:18. See Piska 12.5, 6.

12. The reference is to an earthly king such as David (see Ibn Ezra), whose general, Joab, *cut off every male in Edom* (1 Kings 11:16).

13. Parma MS: "serenity waits upon the wicked nation."

14. This comment takes *yrd*, usually translated "shall have dominion," as a form of *yrd*, "to be brought low."

why so? The Holy One, blessed be He, declared: I know what I am about.¹⁵ I devised this counsel, as is said *Who hath devised this against the Adversary?*¹⁶ (Isa. 23:8). I am He who devised it against them: *The Lord of hosts hath devised it* (Isa. 23:9).

Another comment: *Minni*¹⁷ *Ephraim*. What is implied by the phrase *minni Ephraim*? "It is because of Me that Ephraim," for, according to our Masters, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: As far back as the days of Moses the decision came from Me (*minni*). *When Moses said unto Joshua: "Choose us out men"* (Exod. 17:9), would he have used the word *us* if he were speaking for himself alone? No. In saying *us* he had in mind My command [that Joshua fight against Amalek but not blot him out], though Joshua was capable of blotting out entirely the brood of Amalek.¹⁸ Hence, *It is because of Me that Ephraim plucked up only some of them—them of Amalek*.

3. Another comment: *Out of Ephraim*. Why are Joseph's children the ones to requite Esau?¹⁹ Because Joseph, though his brothers hated him, as is said *His brothers hated him*²⁰ (Gen. 37:4), yet turned their hatred into love. But Esau turned Jacob's love for him into hatred. So the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph come and be the one to requite Esau.

Another comment on Joseph: His brothers sinned against him in that they hated him; and his brothers supposed that in keeping with what they had done to him he hated them in re-

15. Against the lowly who gave no offense, yet, like Joseph, were sold into slavery, no argument such as might be directed against the other brothers will avail. See Piska 12:5, 6.

16. Whenever the word Tyre (*Šwr*) is spelled without the *waw*, simply *Šr*, as here, it is taken to mean Rome, the archadversary. And so, in the final battle against Rome, one who springs out of lowly Joseph will lead. See Piskas 17:8 and [49:9].

17. Usually translated "out of." But the form not being the regular *min*, "out of," is construed as meaning "from Me."

18. Joshua merely enfeebled (*wyhlwš*) them (Exod. 17:13). The remainder of the task God assigned to Saul, who was to come out of the Tribe of Benjamin.

19. Cf. Ps. 80:3, 18.

20. MT: *they hated him*.

turn: *It may be that Joseph will hate us* (Gen. 50:15). But Joseph did not deal thus with them: instead he requited them with good deeds for their evil ones. As for Esau, when he showed his hatred of Jacob—*And Esau hated Jacob* (Gen. 27:41)—Jacob did not return his hatred, but said instead: "Are you hostile to me because of the blessing? Behold, it is given to you: *Take, I pray thee, my blessing that was to have been bestowed upon thee* (Gen. 33:11)." But Esau would still not root hatred out of his heart. Accordingly, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph who rooted hatred out of his heart come and requite Esau who kept it—his hatred—in his heart.

Another comment: *Out of Ephraim*.²¹ Why Joseph? Because his brothers had done so many evil things to him. Yet when he saw them standing in anguish he could not subdue his feelings of compassion; indeed his eyes streamed tears because of them. Joseph was unable to restrain himself, *for his heart yearned toward his brothers; and he sought where to weep; and he entered into his chamber, and wept there* (Gen. 43:30). But as for Esau—his heart did not melt for his brother, as is said, *Because he did pursue his brother with the sword and did cast off all pity* (Amos 1:11). And again, *Thou didst show them no mercy; upon the aged hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke* (Isa. 47:6). Accordingly, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let Joseph who had pity on his brothers come and requite Esau who owned no pity for his brothers: *Out of Ephraim came one who would pluck them up—them of Amalek—by the roots*.²²

4. Another comment: *Out of Ephraim*. Why is the one who is to pluck up Amalek by the roots to come *out of Ephraim*? Because as far back as the days of Jacob this Tribe of Ephraim had been considered the right one to exact punishment from Esau. When [was Jacob told this]? When Jacob was coming from Paddan-aram, and Esau began to advance toward him and toward his children to slay them, Jacob saw what he

21. "*Out of Ephraim*"—Parma MS.

22. "*and did cast off all pity* (Amos 1:11) . . . *by the roots*"—Parma MS.

meant to do and became distressed: *Then Jacob was greatly afraid, and was distressed* (Gen. 32:8). Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself to him and said: "Look here, the children of Rachel are with thee, and yet thou art afraid. As thou livest, Rachel's children are destined to exact punishment from Esau whenever he intends to set upon thy children." When Jacob saw what God's plan was, at once he took special precautions in behalf of Rachel and of her children. Indeed from the way in which he arranged his people you may surmise that the Holy One, blessed be He, had told him exactly what to do. For he divided his people into several companies, [saying], If Esau should come to one company, *then the company which is left, shall be for deliverance* (Gen. 32:9)—to be exact, he divided them into four companies, placing Rachel within the safest of all of them. For from the text, *And he put the handmaids and their children foremost* (Gen. 33:2), you see that the handmaids were first, and behind them their children; behind these, *Leah and her children after* (*ibid.*), and then behind these, *Rachel and Joseph* (*ibid.*). Jacob said: Even if all²³ be slain, with only Rachel's son remaining, I²⁴ shall still be delivered through Rachel's son: *the company which is left, shall be for deliverance* (Gen. 32:9). How so? Because Rachel's children are the ones singled out to exact punishment from this evil seed of Amalek. *Out of Ephraim is to come he who would pluck them up—them of Amalek—by the roots.*

Another comment: *Out of Ephraim*, etc. What is meant by *After thee, Benjamin?* The Holy One, blessed be He, said: For ever, *After thee*, [*O Joshua, it is to be a man of*] *Benjamin* who will demand satisfaction from the seed of Amalek. You can see so for yourself: A man of the seed of Amalek rose up and waged war against Israel; and against him there rose up none other than one <of the seed> of Benjamin. And who was this man of the seed of Amalek? The wicked Haman, as is said *King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the son of Hammedatha the*

23. "of one's children" deleted, as in Parma MS.

24. Jacob is here speaking in behalf of the people of Israel.

*Agagite*²⁵ (Esther 3:1), to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, said: As thou livest, a man of the seed of Benjamin is held in readiness to come against thee and crush thy roots. And who was this man? Mordecai, of whom it is said *There was a certain Jew in Shushan the castle, whose name was Mordecai the son of Jair the son of Shimei the son of Kish, a man of Benjamin* (Esther 2:5).

5. *Out of Ephraim*. Citing R. [Huna],²⁶ R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: *Diverse weights, and diverse measures, both of them alike are an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. 20:10). *A false balance is an abomination to the Lord* (Prov. 11:1). And what does the next verse say? *When premeditated sin cometh, then cometh the shame [of defeat]* (Prov. 11:2). When Israel weigh things out in exact measures and just weights, using true-balancing scales, no nation and no kingdom can have dominion over them. But when they are suspect as to weights, at once enemies, [such as Amalek], come upon them. *A false balance is an abomination to the Lord*. And what is said in the next verse? *When premeditated sin cometh, then cometh the shame [of defeat]*²⁷

6. In another comment, the verse is read *Out of Ephraim itself come they whose root is in Amalek*²⁸ (Judg. 5:14). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Then, when I fall, they rejoice, and gather themselves together* (Ps. 35:15). When-

25. *The Agagite* is taken to mean "one who came from the loins of Agag, king of Amalek" (see 1 Sam. 15:8).

26. "R. [Huna]"—see B. Z. Bacher, 'Aggaḏaṭ 'Amora'e 'Ereṣ Yiśra'el (Tel Aviv, 5698/1938), 3, 3, 91.

27. R. Tanhuma's discourse is incomplete. In parallel homilies the fact that the command *Thou shalt not have in thy house diverse measures* (Deut. 26:13) is followed at once by *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 26:17), is adduced as proof that in consequence of false weights enemies will attack Israel. See PRKB, 24b-25a; and Tanhuma, *Ki ṭese'*, 8.

28. Prof. Mordecai Margulies suggests that here a play on *minni* (usually translated "out of") and *minuṭ* ("heresy") may be intended. And so the verse would read: *Because of heresy, O Ephraim, your roots are to be plucked up by Amalek*.

ever Israel slip and fall into heretical ways,²⁹ forthwith the heathen nations of the world rejoice and gather themselves together to slay the people of Israel. Hence, *when I fall, they rejoice and gather themselves together.*

What specific example may one give of such hostile intent? The one alluded to in the conclusion of the verse *They who are degraded gather themselves together—something which I do not understand*³⁰ (*ibid.*). At the time the Sages met in Lydda in the upper chamber of the house of Nithzah, they had to decree [that Jews, except when they were called upon to commit the sins of idolatry, unchastity, and bloodshed, were to submit to the demands of the heathen nations].³¹ Thus, whenever I slip and fall into heretical ways, the heathen rejoice as they gather to attack—heathen nations who are themselves degraded and who are [spiritual] cripples. Whenever Israel slip and fall into heretical ways, those nations who are degraded are always at hand for executing judgment. As the verse goes on to say, *When I fall . . . they tear me and cease not*—they tear and tear. Whereupon Israel say: Master of the universe, shall the degraded execute judgment upon those who merely slip and fall? Shall the degraded for ever be given permission to sit and wait for me to stumble into a fall so that they can set upon me?

Then again the words *When I fall they rejoice and gather themselves together* are taken to refer to Aaron's death and its consequence. Thus after Scripture says, *And when all the congregation saw that Aaron was dead* (Num. 20:29), it goes on to speak in the following verse of the Canaanites and their

29. PE: *mynwł*, "err by way of heresy." Parma MS, which reads *myył* "are shaken and brought to a fall," gives the same meaning.

30. JV: *and those whom I know not.*

31. A meeting of scholars which took place during the persecution initiated by Hadrian after Bar Koseba's rebellion (135 C.E.). In this passage it is apparently stated that Jewish misdeeds, Jewish falling into heretical ways, were ultimately responsible for their persecution by Hadrian. Because of Ephraim's own deeds came the persecution initiated by the Romans whose roots are in Amalek, his baleful spirit ever lurking in the background. See Friedmann's note; and B.Sanh 74a.

gathering against Israel: *The King of Arad*³² *heard . . . he fought against Israel* (Num. 21:1).

Or the words *When I fall*, etc., may refer to Israel's falling away from God after they had gone forth from Egypt, a falling away which Scripture refers to in the verse *Because of the striving of the children of Israel, and because they tried the Lord, saying: "Is the Lord among us, or not?"* (Exod. 17:7). In speaking thus they meant, according to R. Judah: "If He is Lord over all the nations even as He is Lord over us and among us, we will serve Him; but if He is not, we will not serve Him." In regard to their speaking thus R. Nehemiah taught: What is meant by *Is the Lord among us*? They said: If He distributes sustenance among us we will serve Him; but if He does not, we will not serve Him.

In another comment, the word *kṛb* is read not *among us* but *in our inwards*,³³ as in the verse *But the inwards (kṛb) and the legs shall he wash in water* (Lev. 1:13). Hence in speaking thus, *Is the Lord in our inwards?* the children of Israel meant, according to R. Abbahu: "When thoughts stir within us, is the Lord in our innermost being? Does He know what thoughts are stirring within us? If so, we will serve Him; if not, we will not serve Him." Behold the folly which took hold of the children of Israel! The Presence had been bearing them as its burden. They had been carried upon clouds of glory and encircled by them. The pillar of cloud had gone before them, *In the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bore thee* (Deut. 1:31). And yet they said: *Is the Lord among us*? R. Berechiah the Priest Berabbi said: Think of a mighty man who was walking along the road with his son upon his shoulder. Thus with his son upon his shoulder the mighty man passed one man, a second, and a third. At length the son, chancing to see another man, asked: "As you live, have you seen my daddy?" Thereupon his father seized him and threw

32. Said to have been king of Amalek. See Num. Rabbah 19:19.

33. One might have expected the phrase "in our camp." Why "among us"? To intimate, says R. Abbahu, the meaning "in our innermost being."

him to the ground, saying, "All this distance I have been bearing you along on my shoulders, and now you babble, 'Have you seen daddy?'"³⁴ Even so Israel were carried upon clouds of glory, *In the wilderness, where thou hast seen how that the Lord thy God bore thee, as a man doth bear his son (ibid.)*. And yet they asked, *Is the Lord among us?* so that *Then came Amalek* at once.

7. But if Amalek came as one sent to make them expiate their sins, [is it not astonishing that] God said to them: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 25:17)? One would not have expected Him to say this, but rather, "Remember what ye did in Rephidim." How then to explain why He said *Remember*, etc.? R. Aḥa suggested: Consider the story of a man who slipped in at night to steal grapes from a vineyard, where the watchman was his friend. As soon as the watchman spied him, he perceived that it was his friend. What did he do? He sicked on him a dog that was standing there; but then pulled the dog away from him. And whenever the watchman wished to remind this friend of his that he had once come to steal grapes, he would remind him in a roundabout way by saying to him: "Remember how I pulled the dog away from you." One would have expected God to remind Israel directly: "Remember what ye did in Rephidim." Why, then, did He say *Remember what Amalek did?*³⁵ Because He preferred a roundabout way of making them aware of their misconduct. The Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say: Even though you angered Me so that the wicked one had to be sicked on you, nevertheless it is

34. "Think of a mighty man, etc. . . . and now you babble, 'Have you seen daddy?'" —Parma MS. PE: "Think of a mighty man who was walking along the road, and upon his shoulder his son whom he was taking to market. And when the son saw a desirable object he said to his father, 'Buy it for me,' and his father bought it for him the first time, and the second, and the third. And his son still upon his shoulder. At length the son saw someone, whom he asked, 'Have you seen daddy?' Thereupon the mighty man seized his son and threw him to the ground. He said: Is this the way? I have been carrying you on my shoulders, and now you say, 'Have you seen daddy?'"

35. See Piska 12.12.

for Me to pluck up by the root the last of Amalek's line. *It is [a decision made] by Me that Ephraim pluck them up—them of Amalek—by the roots.*³⁶

Another comment: *Pluck them up—them of Amalek—by the roots.* These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, *Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way* (Prov. 1:31). Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, see fit to let cruelty be the mode of His conduct toward Amalek, saying: *thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Deut. 25:19); and *slay both man and woman, infant and suckling* (1 Sam. 15:3)? Because, said the Holy One, blessed be He, I am anticipating something which Amalek is otherwise committed to do. It is revealed and known to Me how an Amalekite will decree death for *young and old, little children and women, in one day* (Esther 3:13). Hence have I commanded, *Slay both man and woman* (1 Sam. 15:3), and *thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek*, who therefore will have been made to *eat the fruit of their own way*. With reference to God's foredooming of Amalek, Scripture says: *Because Haman the son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, the enemy of all the Jews . . . had cast pur, that is, the lot, to discomfit them, and to destroy them*; then Scripture goes on to say, *When she came before the king* (Esther 9:24-25)—that is, before the King of kings—the Holy One, blessed be He, said: *In accordance with the book*,³⁷ *his wicked device . . . should return upon his own head* (Esther 9:25). In accordance with what book? The one of which it is said *In the book write this for a memorial . . . I will utterly blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Exod. 17:14), who will have been made to *eat of the fruit of their own way, and are to be filled with their own devices* (Prov. 1:31)—with the very things which they devised and schemed against us.

36. See Piska 13.2.

37. JV: *he commanded by letters that.*

8. David said: Master of the universe, they did all they could against us—they made a mock of the mark of circumcision, the mark which shows that Thou didst choose us; they burned Thy House and Thy Torah. True, Thou didst cause to be written, and didst say, in the Torah, *Remember what Amalek did unto thee* (Deut. 25:17), but do Thou remember what they did to us,³⁸ since with Thee there is no forgetfulness. And if Thou dost not wish to be reminded of what they did to us, remember what they did [to Thy Temple] in Jerusalem the day they entered into it: *Remember, O Lord, against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem* (Ps. 137:7). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: You would remind Me? With Me there is no forgetfulness: I remember what they did. But you who are flesh-and-blood and are likely to forget, remember what Amalek did to you, so that you blot out his name from the world: *Remember what Amalek did unto thee . . . thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek* (Deut. 25:17, 19). When they asked: "Master of the universe, is it for us to blot out his name?" He replied: Yes. It is known and revealed to Me that when I surrender Amalek into the hand of Saul your king, he will let some of Amalek's seed remain alive, indeed will spare the king of Amalek: *But Saul and the people spared Agag* (1 Sam. 15:9). Therefore do I enjoin you, *thou shalt blot out*. And even though Saul spare Agag, yet Samuel will come and slay him in a manner that makes the heart sink in horror:³⁹ *And Samuel hewed Agag in pieces* (1 Sam. 15:33). Agag will say to Samuel: "Are Prophets wont to slay in such a manner?" Samuel will reply: *As thy sword hath made women childless* (*ibid.*). What can he have meant by *hath made . . . childless*? He meant: As thy grandfather Amalek did, who mutilated the sexual parts of Israel's males and doomed their wives to dwell childless and widowed: *As thy sword hath made women childless, so shall thy mother be childless among women*.

38. "what they did to us"—Parma MS.

39. "in a manner . . . in horror"—Parma MS; PE: "in an unnatural manner."

The Holy One, blessed be He, goes on to say: I told them to blot out the name of Amalek in this world; but in the time-to-come the Tribe I hold ready against Amalek will exact punishment from him and pluck up by the root the last of his line from the world: *It is of Me that Ephraim pluck them up—they of Amalek—by the roots; after thee, Benjamin* (Judg. 5:14).⁴⁰

40. See Piska 13.1.

SUMMARY

The mystery and paradox
of the Red Heifer

A Red Heifer for the rite of purification may be purchased from a heathen, even though heathen are under suspicion of wishing to bring Israel to sin. A story is told of a heathen who had just such a wish in selling his heifer to Jews (Sec. 1). Another story is told of a different sort of heathen who as a result of purchasing a heifer from a Jew became a convert (Sec. 2).

For all that Abraham did for the angels who came to him, God repaid his children by giving them the Red Heifer as a means of purifying Israel (Sec. 3). Purity is ever His concern (Sec. 4). Indeed every utterance of His is one of holiness and purity. Sometimes God resorts to labored language and circumlocution so as not to use a word which stands for anything unclean (Sec. 5). So great is God's concern for purity that the section in Scripture concerning the Red Heifer has forty-nine references to cleanness, a number corresponding to the forty-nine ways in which the Torah may be interpreted. The identity of the numbers intimates that the section on the Red Heifer is equal in importance to the entire Torah. In fact, when Moses went up on high, he found God absorbed in reading this very section, for He busies Himself with nothing other than the means of purifying Israel (Sec. 6).

Not even Solomon, who was privy to every kind of wisdom, could fathom the mystery of the Red Heifer (Sec. 7). And Solomon's wisdom could be set over against all of Israel's; his wisdom, containing him like a dyke or a wall, restrained the evil Impulse within him (Sec. 8). Solomon's wisdom exceeded the wisdom of the children of the east, as is proved by Solomon's uncovering of a hoax which Pharaoh sought to perpetrate on him. Solomon was wiser than Adam who named everything that exists, including himself and God on high; wiser than Abraham, than Moses, than

Joseph who knew seventy languages; wiser than the generation of the wilderness. So great was Solomon's wisdom that he had three thousand parables to illustrate each and every verse he uttered and a thousand and five interpretations for each and every parable. Solomon knew the reasons for the manner of cleansing a leper; knew the reasons for the differing requirements for the slaughter of beasts and fowl; knew why he who hunted certain creeping things on the Sabbath was not culpable; why fish do not require ritual slaughtering. By way of contrast to Solomon's wisdom is cited the wrong-headed teaching that fish require ritual slaughtering and that the son of a Gentile woman married to a Jewish man may be circumcised on the Sabbath. Great as was Solomon's wisdom, however, he could not understand the section concerning the Red Heifer (Sec. 9).

In further examination of the statute concerning the Red Heifer, the verse *Who is as the wise* (Eccles. 8:1) is cited. *The wise* is identified successively as God, as Adam, as Israel, as a disciple of the wise, and finally as Moses, the first to be told that priests who become ritually unclean can be made pure by the ash of the Red Heifer (Sec. 10).

Moses was extraordinary in other ways. During all the forty years that Israel were in the wilderness, he, with Aaron beside him, served as High Priest, though wearing a white linen garment which lacked the stripe of priestly office. Like Aaron and like Samuel, when he called to God, he was given an answer. God spoke to him in a pillar of cloud as He spoke to Aaron and to Samuel. The Torah was inscribed in his name even as certain parts of it were inscribed in the names of Aaron and of Samuel (Sec. 11).

In resuming discussion of the Red Heifer, it is said that all those who take any part in its preparation have their garments defiled, but that the ash of the Red Heifer makes garments ritually clean—a paradox which the Impulse to evil uses in an attempt to discredit the entire precept (Sec. 12). But God has revealed the mystery of the Red Heifer to Moses and has promised him that in the time-to-come the mystery will be made as clear as crystal to all of Israel. Moreover, God told Moses that the one teacher who would begin his instruction in the Mishnah with the section on the Red Heifer was to be a descendant of Moses and thus would make up for Moses' disappointment in his own children. The paradox of

Moses' own experience—the fact that he cleansed Israel of idolatry while one of his own children defiled himself with idolatry—parallels the paradox of the Red Heifer itself (Sec. 13).

Incidentally, High Priests such as Simeon the Just spent as much as sixty talents of gold on the runway for the Red Heifer, in order to lend solemnity to the preparation of its ash.

Though the rite of the Red Heifer may in some ways resemble the mixing of medicines, it has no human origin but is divine, established by a decree of God which must be obeyed without cavil. Differing from this significance of the rite, another commentator sees the Red Heifer as a symbolic expiation for Israel's misdeed in regard to the golden calf (Sec. 14).

Finally, other commentators, by means of allegorical interpretation, see in the rites of the Red Heifer a prefiguring of Israel's experience in Egypt, Babylon, Media, Greece, and Rome, and a prefiguring of Rome's ultimate destruction. Still others see Israel unruly as a heifer and so punished and exiled, but finally, through the merit of Israel's devout men, delivered, cleansed by God Himself, and restored to Jerusalem. There, in the time-to-come, God, dispensing with the Red Heifer, will Himself cleanse Israel of their sins (Sec. 15).

*This is the statute of the Torah
which the Lord hath commanded, saying:
Speak unto the children of Israel, that
they bring thee a Red Heifer, faultless,
wherein is no blemish, and upon which
never came yoke (Num. 19:2).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: At the time when it was the practice to prepare a Red Heifer for the rite of purification, was it permitted for a Jew to purchase one from a heathen?

1. Num. 19:1–22 is the lesson in the Pentateuch on Sabbath *Parah* (see Table of Scriptural Lessons, p. xv)—the Sabbath of the Heifer, the third of the four special Sabbaths (See Meḡ 3:4). The lesson concerning the Red Heifer was introduced to remind those who had been rendered unclean through contact with a dead body that they must purify themselves; in order to partake of the Paschal sacrifice they were required to have sprinkled upon them water mixed with the ash of the Red Heifer. See Piska 10.1, n. 1.

Our Masters of the Mishnah taught as follows: Though in the opinion of R. Eliezer a Red Heifer may not be purchased from a heathen, the Sages say that it may be purchased.²

And what is the reason for R. Eliezer's saying that a Red Heifer is not to be purchased from a heathen? Because idolaters are under suspicion³ of wishing to bring Israel to sin.

R. Phinehas the Priest ben Hama taught⁴ in the name of our Masters: It happened that Israel had need of a Red Heifer and could not find one; at long last they found one at a heathen's. They went to him and said: "Sell us the heifer which you have, for we need one." He replied: "Give me my price for her and take her." (And what was the going price for a heifer? Three gold coins or four gold coins at the most). They replied: "We shall give it." As they went to fetch the money, the heathen guessed for what purpose they needed the heifer. And so when they came and brought the money for her, he said to them: "I shall not sell her to you." They said: "Perhaps you desire to increase the price? If you so desire, we will give you all you ask."

Now that the wicked man saw clearly that they were pressing for the heifer, he decided to put up the price as high as possible.⁵ When they said: "Take five gold coins," he did not want to. "Take ten, take twenty," they went on, until they reached one hundred, and still he did not want to. In fact—so some of our Masters say—they went up to a thousand gold coins. Then he consented to give them the heifer for a thousand gold coins. Having come to an agreement with him, they went to bring him the gold coins. What did the wicked man then do? He said to another heathen, a boon companion of his: "Come and see how I fool those Jews. The only reason they are trying to get the heifer from me and are willing to give me all the money is that a yoke has never been upon her. Watch me take the yoke and put it upon the heifer: I'll have some fun at their

2. See Par 2:1.

3. "for sins [of the body] and" deleted, as in Parma MS.

4. "that which he reported" deleted, as in Parma MS.

5. [Literally "The more he perceived that they were pressed for it, the higher he raised the price." L. N.] Parma MS: "decided to make sport of them."

expense and get my money just the same." This is what he did: He took the yoke and put it on the heifer for the entire night.

Now you can tell a heifer which never bore a yoke by the fact that on her neck, in the place where the yoke is set,⁶ are two particular hairs which stand upright as long as she has never borne a yoke. But as soon as a yoke is set upon her, the two hairs are bent down at once. And there is still another sign of her never having borne a yoke. As long as no yoke has been upon her, both eyes look straight ahead. After a yoke has been upon her, her eyes have an anxious look,⁷ as she turns her head and rolls her eyes, trying to see the yoke.⁸

When they came with all the gold in their hands to take the heifer from the heathen and showed him the gold, he went in, and first removing the yoke from the heifer, led her out to them. When he led her out, they proceeded to examine her and to look for the two signs [of her never having borne a yoke], but the two particular hairs which should have been straight were bent down, and furthermore her eyes were rolling back⁹ because of the yoke.

They said to him: "Take your heifer. We can do without her. Fool around with your own mother."

When the wicked heathen saw that they were returning his heifer to him and that he had come out with hands empty of all the gold coins, his mouth which had said "I will have some fun at their expense," proceeded to say "Blessed is He who chose this people." Then he went into his house, strung up a rope, and hanged himself. *So perish all Thine enemies, O Lord* (Judg. 5:31).

Thus you know that a heifer may be purchased anywhere, either from a Jew or from a heathen. You should not say, "It is written in the Torah that a heifer may be purchased only from a Jew," since it may be purchased from a heathen as well.

6. Parma MS: "on the place from which the yoke is torn loose."

7. [Rather, "her eyes are restless"? L. N.]

8. See H. Yalon in *Tarbiz*, 6 (1935), 225-26.

9. Taken as passive of *pll*, "roll." See Yalon. In MC the verb is read not *nplw* but *npzlw*, "squinted." And so in Parma MS.

And the proof? From what is read in the Scripture lesson for the day, *Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring thee a Red Heifer*, etc., [without specifying where they are to get the heifer].

2. Let our Masters teach us: How many days before the burning of the heifer was the priest in charge of burning her required to move from his home into the chamber overlooking the Temple (*Birah*)?

Our Masters taught: "It was seven days before the burning of the heifer that the priest in charge of burning the heifer was required to move from his home into a chamber overlooking the Temple (*Birah*)" (Par 3:1).

Concerning this statement it was asked: What was the *Birah*? R. Johanan and Resh Lakish differed. R. Johanan said: There was a tower called *Birah* on the Mount of Olives.¹⁰ But Resh Lakish said: The entire city¹¹ where the Temple stood was called *Birah*, this being the name given to the Temple in the verse *to build [God's] Palace (Birah), for which I have made provision* (1 Chron. 29:19).

And why did they not burn a bullock, such as is generally offered up on the altar? Why a heifer? R. Levi said: Whatever the Holy One, blessed be He, wishes to do, He does. When He desires it, He requires offerings of the male gender, *a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat* (Lev. 22:27). And when He desires it, the Holy One, blessed be He, requires them to be of the female gender: *that they bring thee a Red Heifer*.

Our Masters told this story: In Israel there was a certain man who owned a plowing heifer, but his wealth slipped out of his hand, and he had to sell her to a heathen. As soon as the heathen took possession of her, he plowed with her during the six days of the week. On the Sabbath he brought her out again to plow for him, but she lay down under the yoke. Though he

10. Mah, following parallel in P.Pes 7:8, 35a, reads "on the mount where the Temple stood."

11. Mah emends "The entire mount."

kept beating the heifer, she would not budge from her place. Seeing this, he went to the Jew who had sold him the heifer, and said: "Come, take your heifer. Something's ailing her, for though I beat her again and again, she will not budge from her place."

The Jew understood that what the heathen was talking about had something to do with the Sabbath, the heifer having become accustomed to rest on the Sabbath. So he said to the heathen: "Come along, and I will get her up." When he came to the heifer, he spoke to her, [spoke right] into her ear: "Heifer, heifer, thou knowest that when thou wast in my hands, thou didst plow six¹² days in the week but wast allowed to rest on the Sabbath. But my sins having brought it about that thou art in the hands of a heathen, I beg thee to stand up and plow."

At once she stood up and plowed.

The heathen then said to him: "I beseech you, take back your heifer! Will I have to come as I just have, and wait upon you, that you should appear and make her stand up? No matter what,¹³ I won't let you go until you tell me one thing: What was it you did put into her ear¹⁴ that made her stand up and plow?¹⁵ Because I wore myself out and even struck her,¹⁶ but still could not get her to stand up."

The Jew then proceeded to calm him down and said to him: "I used neither sorcery nor witchcraft. But I put it to her, thus and thus, into her ear, and she stood up and plowed."

Thereupon the heathen was awe-struck. He said: If a heifer

12. "six"—Parma MS.

13. Literally "Aside from this and from this."

14. Parma MS: "The heathen said to him: I want her, that heifer of yours, permanently, even as now; and I will keep after you to come and make her stand up every Sabbath besides this one. Aside from this, I shall not let you be until you tell me what you did to the heifer." [This variant would seem to be preferable, since the heathen is stated to be determined to keep the heifer and to desire the secret of how to handle her; in the other variant, he requests the Israelite to take back the heifer, yet demands the secret of handling her, which seems contradictory. L. N.]

15. "that made her stand up and plow"—Parma MS.

16. [This seems rather to be one locution: "I wore myself out beating her." L. N.]

which has no speech and no understanding could acknowledge her Creator, shall not I, whose Maker made me in His own image and put understanding into me—shall not I go and acknowledge my Creator?

At once he went and became a convert and studied and acquired Torah. They used to call him Johanan ben Torta ("son of a heifer"). And to this day our Masters quote law in his name.

And if you are astonished that by means of a heifer a man should be brought near the wings of the Presence, reflect that by means of a heifer the purification of all Israel is achieved. This conclusion follows from the Scripture lesson for the day, *This is the statute of the Torah . . . that they bring thee a Red Heifer.*

3. Concerning *This is the statute of the Torah*, etc. R. Tanhuma bar Abba began his discourse by citing the verse *A righteous man that walketh in his integrity* (Prov. 20:7). Such a man was Abraham, to whom God said, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect" (Gen. 17:1). *Happy are his children after him* (Prov. 20:7), which—so taught R. Eleazar in the name of R. Simon—means that all that Abraham did for the angels, the Holy One, blessed be He, paid back to his children. Abraham said: *And I will fetch a morsel of bread* (Gen. 18:5), and the Holy One, blessed be He, paid back his children; as is said *Behold, I will cause to rain bread from heaven for you* (Exod. 16:4). Abraham said: *And recline yourselves under the tree* (Gen. 18:4), and the Holy One, blessed be He, paid back his children, as is said *I made the children of Israel dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt* (Lev. 23:43). Abraham escorted the angels: *And Abraham went with them to bring them on the way* (Gen. 18:16), and the Holy One, blessed be He, escorted his children, as is said *And the Lord went before them by day* (Exod. 13:21). R. Joshua the Priest son of R. Nehemiah said: Abraham brought water to the angels, as is said *Let now a little water be fetched, and wash your*

feet (Gen. 18:4), and also it is said *Abraham ran unto the herd and fetched a heifer* (Gen. 18:7). Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: A heifer will be the means of purifying thy children. They will put some of the ash of the heifer into the water, sprinkle the mixture, and thus purify Israel.

4. *That they bring thee a Red Heifer* (Num. 19:2). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *The words of the Lord are words pure as silver, tried in a crucible on the earth, refined seven times* (Ps. 12:7). What can be meant by the expression *The words of the Lord are words?*¹⁷ That the words of the Lord are Words. Flesh-and-blood also utters words, but does not live up to them. Why not? Because he lacks the capacity to live up to them. And even if he has the capacity, he may still not live up to them.¹⁸ But why not? Because flesh-and-blood is fleeting. Today he says that he will do a thing, but does not get to do it. Then he goes to sleep, and rises no more. The thing he promised to do comes to naught. His word and his promise come to naught because today he is here, and tomorrow is no more—one day alive, the next day dead. But the Holy One, blessed be He—His promise is a Promise, His word a Word, and what He decrees, He does. Why? Because He lives and endures for ever. As Jeremiah said, *But the Lord is the God of truth* (Jer. 10:10): All the words the Holy One, blessed be He, utters are words of truth, because He lives and endures for ever. Jeremiah's reason for declaring *But the Lord is the God of truth* is found in the conclusion of the verse *He is the living God, and the everlasting King* (*ibid.*). Hence *The words of the Lord are Words*.

5. *Words pure* (Ps. 12:7). What can *pure* mean here except that every utterance of the Holy One, blessed be He, is one of holiness and purity. You find that when Noah's generation was judged

17. "Are not the words of man also words?" See Tanhuma, *Hukkat*, 4.

18. "Is such a thing possible?" deleted, as in Parma MS.

guilty so that the flood was about to overwhelm them, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Noah: Noah, thy generation has been judged to deserve extermination, and I am about to destroy the world. Nevertheless, I shall afterwards turn back to My world in mercy to make it fruitful and cause its creatures to multiply. But how is it to become fruitful and its creatures multiplied? Thou wilt make an ark, and take with thee pairs from each and every species into the ark. Thus when thou goest forth from the ark, the means of preserving the world will be at hand, at hand to bear fruit and to multiply. God said: *Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee seven and seven* (Gen. 7:2). But note how He referred to unclean beasts. He said: *And of the beasts that are not clean* (*ibid.*). R. Johanan pointed out that the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke in a number of verses in a roundabout way, saying as in this verse, *and of the beasts that are not clean*.¹⁹ Why such labored language, why all the extra words? There was no need to say any more than "unclean beasts." The circumlocution, however, was resorted to so as not even to use a word which stands for anything unclean, for every word God speaks is one of holiness and purity. Hence, *The words of the Lord are pure words*.

R. Judah the son of R. Manasseh said: Even when the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to point out to Moses the signs by which wild and domestic animals that were unclean were to be distinguished from those that were clean, how did He say it? *Whatsoever parteth the hoof, and is wholly cloven-footed; and cheweth the cud* (Lev. 11:3). If these two signs are present, the animal is considered clean and may be eaten, as the verse concludes, *that ye may eat* (*ibid.*). Thus far the signs of cleanness. Then He came to the signs of uncleanness and gave the signs, contriving to speak of the unclean animals by reference to those that are clean: *Nevertheless, these shall ye not eat of them that only chew the cud, or of them that only part the hoof*. There-

19. Gen. 7:2, 8. Scripture could have used the one word *hat-tēme'ah*, "unclean," but avoids it, and instead uses three words, *'āšer 'enannah šēhorah*, "that are not clean." See MTeh 1:3.

upon—as R. Judah the son of R. Manasseh went on to say—He listed in this passage, separately, each and every one [of the animals with its particular signs], the camel, the swine, the rock-badger, and the hare, pronouncing each in turn unclean. Now since He was about to forbid to Israel the eating of each of these animals, He might have been expected to begin with the signs of their uncleanness. Such is the order one would have expected. Yet He did not begin this way. What did He do instead? He began with the signs of their cleanness. For example: *The camel, because he cheweth the cud* (Lev. 11:4), pointing to the sign of cleanness it is possessed of. And then what did He go on to mention? *But parteth not the hoof*, [the sign of uncleanness]. So, too, He treated of the swine. One would expect the text to read, “Because he cheweth not the cud.” But the text does not read thus. It reads instead: *And the swine, because he parteth the hoof*, etc., and then, *but cheweth not the cud* (Lev. 11:7). So, too, with reference to the hare and the rock-badger, the text says, *because he cheweth the cud*. One would not have expected it to read thus, but rather: “Because he parteth not the hoof,” and then read “even though he cheweth the cud.” The text, however, does not follow this order. It begins with mention of a state of cleanness in order to show that God does not let slip from His mouth any reference to uncleanness. Hence, *The words of the Lord are pure words*.

6. *As silver tried* (Ps. 12:7). As the silver to be smelted enters the crucible and is smelted and refined until it emerges in its beauty, so the Torah is refined and smelted in forty-nine ways [through study]: *Refined seven times seven*²⁰ (*ibid.*). What is meant by *refined seven times seven*? R. Johanan ben Pazzi said: It means that the Torah may be interpreted in forty-nine ways.

And so this passage concerning the Red Heifer—*refined seven times seven*—has forty-nine references to cleanness. How so? In

20. JV: *seven times*. But in the comment which follows, *šb'tym*, the dual form of *šb'*, “seven,” is understood to mean “49,” that is seven times seven.

the passage there are seven references to the heifer;²¹ <seven references to burning;²²> seven references to sprinklings;²³ seven references to priests preparing the heifer;²⁴ <seven> references to persons who become unclean because they are involved in these preparations;²⁵ seven references to these seven persons who are to be cleansed;²⁶ and seven references to the same seven who are to wash their clothes.

Nay more: As they were getting ready to burn the heifer whose ashes mixed with water were to be used for purifying Israel, what was their practice? With just such a mixture they sprinkled for seven days the priest in charge of burning the heifer, seven sprinklings every day.²⁷ Thus you find forty-nine sprinklings—*refined seven times seven* indeed. And why this number? As the Torah is interpreted in forty-nine ways, so this passage is shown to contain forty-nine ways of purifying Israel, by way of intimating that the passage is equal in importance to the Torah—to the entire Torah. For, said R. Aḥa in the name of R. Jose bar Ḥanina, as Moses went up on high, he found the Holy One, blessed be He, busy, absorbed in His book. He was busy reading this very passage, the passage dealing with the Red Heifer which begins *This is the statute of the Torah*. And why absorbed? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I am busying Myself with nothing other than the means of purifying Israel. And the proof of His

21. According to Friedmann's n. 31, there are five such references in the text of Scripture; and in Targum Jonathan there are two more specific references—one to the priest who slays the heifer, and the other to the priest who burns it.

22. Her skin, her flesh, her blood, her dung, cedarwood, hyssop, and scarlet.

23. *And Eleazar the priest shall take of her blood . . . and sprinkle of her blood toward . . . the Tent of Meeting seven times* (Num. 19:4).

24. According to Friedmann's n. 34, there are five such references in the text of Scripture; and in Targum Jonathan there are two more such references, the two which mention Moses and Aaron who on this occasion ministered as priests.

25. He who slays the heifer, he who sprinkles its blood, he who burns it, he who casts the cedarwood, etc. into the burning, he who gathers up the ashes of the heifer, he who sprinkles the mixture of ash and water (Num. 12:21), and he who watches over the heifer (B.BM 93a).

26. For a different explanation of the above seven categories see Elijah of Wilno's commentary '*Addereṭ 'Eliyyahu* on Num. 19.

27. See Par 3:1, 5.

saying this? *The mouth of the righteous meditateth wisdom, and his tongue speaketh judgment* (Ps. 37:30). That is, the mouth of the Righteous One of the world meditates Torah. What particular section of the Torah? The one beginning, *This is the statute of the Torah*.²⁸

7. Another comment: *This is the statute of the Torah*. Solomon said: *All this have I proved in wisdom* (Eccles. 7:23)—by which he meant that he had proved himself in every kind of wisdom, in every sort of knowledge which is in the world: *All this have I proved in wisdom*. But then he retracted his words, for he had to give up his previous conviction and he declared: *I say, "Would I could get wisdom"; but it is far from me (ibid.)*. What made Solomon say such a thing? For at first Solomon had said: Into all passages of the Torah and into all depths of wisdom I penetrated and fathomed them: *All this have I proved in wisdom*. But then when he changed his mind and declared: *I say, "Would I could get wisdom,"* it was because he could not fathom the passage concerning the Red Heifer and so he cried: *Would I could get wisdom*.

And lest you think that the wisdom [to fathom this passage of Torah] might have come to him when he grew up²⁹ and reached maturity, the fact is that the fullness of wisdom was given to him when he was still a lad, as is said *God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart* (1 Kings 5:9). What is meant by *God gave Solomon wis-*

28. Inasmuch as God is described as preoccupied with Torah, the one precept of Torah which concerns Him is the precept which seeks to maintain Israel's purity. Even so the tefillin which God is described as wearing (see B.Ber 7a and Men 35b) are said to contain not the regular passages, namely, Exod. 13:1-10, 13:11-16, Deut. 6:4-9, and 11:13-21; but instead the words *And who is like Thy people, like Israel, a nation one in the earth?* (2 Sam. 7:23; and B.Ber 6a). Accordingly, God's meditation in Torah, as well as His observance of precepts such as tefillin, have one concern: maintenance of Israel's purity and uniqueness in the world, thereby making possible the ultimate redemption of humankind. See also Piska 45.1.

29. The phrase "and came into [possession of] sons," which follows in P, is deleted, as in Parma MS.

dom and understanding? R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon ben Jehozadak: To this question a parable gives the answer, a parable of a king who had a friend whom the king loved beyond all measure. He said to his friend: Ask any preferment for yourself, and I shall give you whatsoever you may ask of me. The friend was very foresighted. He said to himself: What preferment shall I ask of the king? If I tell him to make me prefect, prefect is all that I shall ever be. And if I tell him to make me marshal, marshal is all that I shall ever be. Well, then, I shall ask him for a kind of preferment which carries with it a great many perquisites. Silver and gold go along with it.³⁰ Honor and even more preferment go along with it. So he said: "My lord, since you did embolden my heart when you told me to make a request of you, I ask that you give me your daughter in marriage and that I become your son-in-law." The king replied: "As you live, I will do so."

So, too, when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed Himself and said: *Ask what I shall give thee* (1 Kings 3:5; 2 Chron. 1:7), Solomon thought: What shall I ask? Shall I ask for silver and gold? Then these are all I shall ever have. Shall I ask for honor? Then honor is all I shall ever have. Solomon then said: Master of universes, I ask for wisdom—give me wisdom and knowledge. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Because thou didst ask for wisdom, as thou livest, all other things that go along with wisdom, every single one, will be granted to thee:³¹ *Wisdom and knowledge is granted unto thee, and I will give thee riches, and wealth, and honor* (2 Chron. 1:12). And God gave wisdom to Solomon and understanding also when He gave him wisdom as a gift.

8. *And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore* (1 Kings 5:9). Why the comparison *as the sand*? Because Solomon's wisdom by itself could be set over against all of Israel's who are likened to sand, as in the verse *Yet the num-*

30. "Silver and gold go along with it"—Parma MS.

31. "every single one . . . granted to thee"—Parma MS.

ber of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea (Hos. 2:10). Can the comparison hold? Yes. Granted, the Sages have knowledge in keeping with their years. Granted, the Scribes have knowledge. Granted, students of Torah have knowledge. Granted, each and every one of them has knowledge within him. Yet if one were to lift up all of Israel and set them on one side of the balance, and set Solomon on the other side, Solomon's wisdom would be equal in the scale to all of Israel's. Hence, *as the sand*.

Another comment: Why the comparison *as the sand*? R. Levi said: If the sand did not contain the Ocean and make a fence around it, the Ocean would rise up and overflow the whole world and destroy it. But the sand stands before it like a dyke or a wall and does not allow it to rise up against the world. So Solomon's wisdom contained him like a dyke or a wall, as sand contains the sea. How? Because when a man wishes to do something that is not right and his wisdom does not contain his passion, does not stand before him like a wall, all kinds of evil will accumulate in such a man.

Solomon said: With what may such a man be compared? With a city so widely breached that it has no wall: *Like a city broken down and without a wall, so is he whose spirit is without restraint* (Prov. 25:28). Now a city which is breached has all kinds of evil things within it. Robbers come into it. Wild beasts come into it. So it is with everyone whose wisdom does not contain his passion—how many things which are not right he tries to get away with, how many quarrels he snarls in! *Like a city broken down and without a wall, so is he whose spirit is without restraint*.

As for Solomon, when he tried to get away with something that was not right, what used to happen? His wisdom stood up before his passion even as the sand stands before the Ocean—and *largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the seashore* (1 Kings 5:9).

9. *And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east* (1 Kings 5:10). What was the wisdom of the

children of the east? All the children of the east were expert in casting horoscopes and wise in all the theories of astrology. But behold how great was Solomon's wisdom! His knowledge and his wisdom prevailed over the wisdom of the children of the east. To prove his superior wisdom, Scripture, after saying [*Solomon's wisdom*] *excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east*, goes on to say *and all the wisdom of Egypt (ibid.)*. What sort of wisdom was found in Egypt? When Solomon was busy building the Temple, he sent word to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and said to him: "Send me craftsmen, woodcarvers, and masons, for the Temple." What did Pharaoh, king of Egypt, do? When he received Solomon's written requests, he sent for and called together all his magicians and sorcerers. He said: "Discover for me, by sorcerers' means, which ones of these artisans are destined to die this year. I shall then come at Solomon with a complaint and say to him: On account of the artisans you have slain, give me their worth in money." At once the men who were to die within the year were brought before him. Thereupon Pharaoh proceeded to send them to Solomon.

When they came to Solomon, he looked at them and perceived that they were destined to die. Thereupon he proceeded to order them to go back, and put into their hands a written message: "Had you need of shrouds? No need [to send the corpses for them]. Here are shrouds and coffins as well. Go bury your dead." And he gave them shrouds and sent them hence. Thus *Solomon's wisdom excelled . . . all the wisdom of Egypt*.

*For he was wiser than he who contained within himself all mankind*³² (1 Kings 5:11), that is to say, wiser than Adam, the first man. And wherein was the wisdom of Adam? When the Holy One, blessed be He, desired to create the first man, he consulted the ministering angels and said to them: *Shall we make man?*³³ (Gen. 1:26). They asked: Master of universes, *What is man that Thou art mindful of him*, etc.? (Ps. 8:5). God

32. JV: *than all men*.

33. JV: *Let us make man*.

replied: "This being whom I desire to create, his wisdom will be greater than yours." What did God do? He assembled all domestic animals, all wild beasts and fowl, and made them pass before the angels. He asked: What are the names of these creatures? But the angels did not know.

When He created the first man, however, He assembled all domestic animals, all wild beasts and fowl, and made them pass before him. He asked: What are the names of these creatures? Adam replied: This one—the name "ox" fits him. And this one—the name "horse" fits him. And this one—"camel." And this one—"eagle." And this one—"lion." Thus it is written: *And the man gave names to all cattle*, etc. (Gen. 2:20).

God asked him: "And thou, what is thy name?" He replied: "Adam." God asked: "Why?" He replied: "Because I was fashioned out of the earth (*'ādamah*)." God asked: "And I, what is My name?" "Lord." God asked: "Why?" "Because Thou art Lord over all Thy works."

According to R. Aḥa,³⁴ the Holy One, blessed be He, said: *I am the Lord, that is My name* (Isa. 42:8). That is My name, the name by which Adam called Me. That is My name, the name I have consented to be called by. That is My name which I consented to be called by when I am with the ministering angels.³⁵

⟨*Solomon . . . was wiser . . . than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol* (1 Kings 5:11).⟩ By *Ethan* is meant our father Abraham, [who was author of the Psalm headed] "Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite"³⁶ (Ps. 89:1). By *Heman*, "the trusted one," is meant Moses, [of whom God said:] "He is trusted in all My house" (Num. 12:7). By *Calcol*, "the sustainer," is meant Joseph: "And Joseph sustained

34. "R. Aḥa"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Aḥai."

35. Cf. MTeh 8:2.

36. Literally "the mighty one who came from the east." See Piska 6.5; and B.BB 15a. The commentator assumes that Solomon is compared with the most famous Sages of all past time—with Abraham who gazed at the stars (see Gen. 15:5), with Moses who heard God speak, with Joseph who surpassed in the art of government.

his father and his brethren" (Gen. 47:12). [At the time Pharaoh set Joseph over all the land of Egypt], the Egyptians said: "Is it for any reason other than the wisdom ascribed to him that a slave has been made king over us?" What did they do to test him? They took seventy tablets, and writing phrases in seventy languages upon them, tossed them to him; and Joseph read each and every phrase in each language. Besides, he could speak one language—Hebrew³⁷—which the Egyptians did not understand at all. [That the Egyptians tested him in seventy languages is intimated in the verse] *At the time the news went forth that he had been set over all the land of Egypt, Joseph, [confronted with the test of seventy languages, exclaimed:] I understand languages which I had never heard. God had ordained [knowledge of these languages] for Joseph to provide evidence of his wisdom*³⁸ (Ps. 81:6).

Wiser . . . than Darda, which was the generation of the wilderness. And why does Scripture speak of it as Darda? Because it was a generation (*dor*) of men every one of whom was filled with knowledge (*de'ah*).

Wiser . . . than . . . the sons of Mahol, another name for the children of Israel to whom God's presence gave pardon (*mohlah*) for the making of the golden calf.

*And*³⁹ *he spoke three thousand parables* (1 Kings 5:12). R.

37. Hebrew spoken by Israel, a "nation unique in the earth," is not reckoned as being one of the seventy languages spoken by the nations of the earth.

38. JV: *This He ordained in Joseph for a testimony, when he went out through the land in Egypt; where I heard a language that I understood not.* Now because this verse as usually translated is not very clear, the commentator construes it as referring to Joseph at the time he was made head over all the land of Egypt.

The legend that at that instant Joseph became master of 70 languages (see B.Sot 36b) is said to be based on the fact that the verse (Ps. 81:6) begins and ends with the letter 'ayin whose numerical value is 70.

39. The examples which follow are meant to illustrate how Solomon, going beyond the generation which received the Torah in the wilderness, knew how to draw on his own divers inferences from the written text of Torah. 'Eṣ Yosef, citing *Kēli yēḡar*, on Num. Rabbah 19:3.

That the phrase "sons of Mahol" is to be construed as the generation which received pardon for making the golden calf, is in keeping with a Rabbinic norm which assumes that identical series of names in two passages in Scripture must

Samuel bar Nahmani said: We went through all of Scripture and found that Solomon was inspired to utter no more than about eight hundred verses,⁴⁰ and yet you attribute three thousand parables to him. This apparent discrepancy teaches that each and every verse which he was inspired to utter admits of two or three nuances in interpretation, a fact intimated in the verse *As an earring of gold, and also as an ornament of gold, so is the wise reprove*⁴¹ (Prov. 25:12).

But the Rabbis said: Solomon had three thousand parables to illustrate each and every verse; and a thousand and five interpretations for each and every parable, for the verse does not conclude as one might expect with "Solomon's songs were a thousand and five," but with *its songs*, etc. The *its* permits the inference that the songs—each song being considered to supply nuances in interpretation of each parable—[were a thousand and five].⁴²

*And he spoke upon*⁴³ *trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall* (1 Kings 5:13). Is it likely, taking the word *upon* in a literal sense, that a man would speak from treetops? What is really meant is that Solomon spoke upon the subject of trees *from the cedar that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall*. [That is, he speculated:] Why is a leper cleansed by the

be consistent. In this instance, Ethan, Heman, Calcol, etc., are identified in a genealogical list in 1 Chron. 2:6 as being "the sons of Zerah," whereas in 1 Kings 5:11 the same individuals are identified as "sons of Mahol." Hence the conclusion that "sons of Mahol" intimates the generation which received pardon; and the further conclusion that the other names in Kings are likewise available for exposition.

40. According to the Masoretic text, Proverbs has 915 verses, Song of Songs has 117 verses, and Ecclesiastes has 220. R. Samuel may have counted, however, only those verses which are or contain similes. Kimḥi says that some of Solomon's parables may have been lost in the course of Israel's wanderings.

41. The reprove is Solomon himself, and since the reproof is compared to an earring as well as to an ornament, the intimation is drawn that every verse lends itself to several nuances in interpretation.

42. "for the verse does not conclude . . . [were 1005]"—Parma MS; PE: "the antecedent of the clause *its songs were* being the term proverb."

43. JV: *of*.

tallest among the tall and the lowest among the low, by tall cedarwood and lowly hyssop bound together by scarlet thread? ⁴⁴ Because when a man exalts himself like a cedar, he is smitten with leprosy; but when he humbles himself like hyssop, he is healed.

He spoke also upon beasts, and upon fowl (ibid.). But is it likely that a man would speak astride beasts and astride fowl? What is really meant is that Solomon spoke on the subject [of ritual slaughter of beasts and fowl]. Speculating on why it is required in slaughtering an animal that both the windpipe and the gullet be cut while it is enough in slaughtering a fowl that either one be cut,⁴⁵ the answer he gave was that beasts were created out of the dry earth and fowl out of the waters of the sea. Since one verse speaks [of fowl] as having been created out of the earth, *Out of the ground the Lord God formed . . . every fowl of the air* (Gen. 2:19), and another verse speaks of them as having been created out of the waters of the sea, *God said: Let the waters bring forth abundantly . . . fowl that may fly above the earth*, etc. (Gen. 1:20), [fowl are therefore considered in regard to ritual slaughter as midway between beasts and fish].

In a comment on this matter Bar Ḳappara said that fowl were created out of alluvial mud, [and so are beast-like]. But R. Abin said in the name of Samuel of Cappadocia: Just the same, the skin of chickens' feet resembles the scale-covered skin of fish, [and so fowl are considered fish-like].

And upon creeping things (1 Kings 5:13). But is it likely that a man would speak astride creeping things? What Solomon really meant to consider was this question: In regard to the eight creeping things mentioned by name in the Pentateuch,⁴⁶ why is it that he who hunts them or wounds them on the Sabbath is culpable, whereas in regard to other creeping things

44. See Lev. 14:4.

45. See Hul 2:1 and B.Hul 27b.

46. The weasel, the mouse, the great lizard, the gecko, the land-crocodile, the lizard, the sand-lizard, the chameleon. See Lev. 11:29-30.

which are likewise forbidden for food he who hunts them or wounds them is not culpable?⁴⁷ Solomon's answer was that he who hunts the former is culpable because they have skins.⁴⁸

And upon fishes (ibid.). But is it likely that a man would speak astride fish? Actually Solomon was speculating upon the following question: Why is it that all kinds of animals, wild and domestic, as well as fowl, require ritual slaughtering, [but that fish do not]?⁴⁹

Jacob of Kefar Nibburin taught in Tyre concerning fish that they require ritual slaughtering. When R. Haggai heard of this teaching he had him summoned, and he asked him: On the basis of what verse do you teach thus? R. Jacob replied: Upon authority of the verse which reads, *God said: "Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creature that hath life, and fowl that may fly,"* etc. (Gen. 1:20)—that is, even as fowl require slaughtering, so fish require slaughtering. R. Haggai said: Lay him down that he may be lashed. R. Jacob asked: And shall a man who speaks of matters based on a text in Scripture be given the lash? R. Haggai replied: The verses you cite do not apply. R. Jacob asked: What verse does apply? R. Haggai replied: The one which reads, *Shall the flocks and the herds be slain for them? . . . Or shall all the fish of the sea, be gathered together for them? . . .* (Num. 11:22). Note that of fish the verse does not say *be slain*, but *gathered*,⁵⁰ and hence implies that merely catching and taking them into the house is enough. R. Jacob said: Keep on beating me—you are beating some sense into me.

Jacob of Nubra'i taught in Tyre in regard to the circumcision of the son of a Gentile woman [and a Jewish man], that the

47. See Shab 14:1.

48. Since he breaks the skin by wounding them or suffuses the skin with blood by bruising them, he is guilty of working on the Sabbath, for breaking the skin comes under the heading of "threshing" and bruising the skin comes under the heading of "dyeing." See Bertinoro on Shab 7:2.

49. See Num. Rabbah 19:3.

50. "Note that of fish, the verse does not say *be slain*, but *gathered*"—Parma MS.

son may be circumcised on the Sabbath. When R. Haggai heard of this teaching he summoned R. Jacob, and asked him: Upon what authority do you teach thus? R. Jacob replied: Upon the authority of the verse which reads, *And they declared their pedigrees after their families, by their fathers' houses*⁵¹ (Num. 1:18); and the verse which reads, *And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised* (Gen. 17:12). R. Haggai said: Lay him down that he may receive lashes. R. Jacob asked: And shall a man who has uttered words of Torah be lashed? R. Haggai said: The verses you cite do not apply. R. Jacob asked: What verses do apply? R. Haggai replied: First, lie down and hearken. And he went on to say: If a Gentile comes to you and says, "I will become a Jew on condition that I be circumcised on the Sabbath or on the Day of Atonement," shall the Sabbath <or the Day of Atonement> be profaned on his account, or shall the Sabbath or the Day of Atonement not be profaned on his account? On his account, it goes without saying that neither the Sabbath nor the Day of Atonement may be profaned: only for the son of a Jewess is an exception made. R. Jacob said: Yes, but what verse applies? R. Haggai replied: The verse which reads, *Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them*,⁵² according to the counsel of the Lord (Ezra 10:3).

R. Jacob asked: And would you give me the lash on the strength of a non-Pentateuchal text?⁵³ R. Haggai replied: This text goes on to say, *and let it be done according to the Torah*. R. Jacob asked: But according to what particular verse of the Torah? R. Haggai replied: According to the one which declares: *Neither shalt thou make marriages with them: thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son*, etc. (Deut. 7:3). Why this particular prohibition? *For [the heathen son-in-law] will turn away thy [grand]son from following Me* (Ezra 7:4). This

51. Thus the child is reckoned after the father, who in this case is a true Israelite.

52. Born, that is, of the heathen wives. This verse indicates that their children, as well as the mothers, are considered heathen, not Jews.

53. Hebrew *Kabbalah*, i.e. the Scriptural books excluding the Pentateuch.

verse indicates that Scripture uses "thy son" only in speaking of a son born of a Jewess: Scripture does not use "thy son," but "her son," in speaking of a son born of an idolatress or of a heathen maidservant. Thereupon R. Jacob said: Keep on beating me—you are beating some sense into me.

Solomon said: All these speculations upon various subjects I understood. In regard to this section concerning the heifer, however, whenever I come to it and try to look into it and explain it, I say, "*Would I could get wisdom*"; but it is far from me (Eccles. 7:23).

10. <Another comment: *This is the statute of the Torah* (Num. 19:2).> [This verse is to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere]: *Who is as the wise? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the strength of his face is changed* (Eccles. 8:1).

Who is as the wise? that is, as the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is said "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" (Prov. 3:19). *And who knoweth the interpretation (p̄sr) of a thing?* No one but Him who interpreted (*p̄rš*) the written Torah to Moses [in the light of the Oral Law]. *A man's wisdom maketh His face to shine.* R. Yudan said: Very wise in the power of language are the Prophets who in figurative terms speak of the likeness of the Almighty as though of the likeness of a man, as is said "And I heard the voice of a Man"⁵⁴ (Dan. 8:16). R. Yudan bar Simon said: There is another verse which uses figurative terms even more boldly: "And upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a Man above upon it" (Ezek. 1:26). The verse from Ecclesiastes goes on: *And the [terrifying] strength of His face is changed* from the measure of justice to the measure of mercy toward Israel, [because they accept the Torah and the teaching of the Prophets].

54. Since here "the voice of a Man" directs the angel Gabriel, it is understood as being the voice of God.

Another comment: *Who is as the wise?* that is, as Adam, to whom it was said, "Thou seal most accurate, full of wisdom," etc. (Ezek. 28:12). *And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?* For he it was who gave names interpretive of the natures of all creatures, as is said "And Adam gave names to all cattle, and to the fowl of the air" (Gen. 2:20). *Man's (Adam's) wisdom maketh his face to shine.* R. Levi said in the name of R. Simeon ben Menasya: Even the round of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun. And do not wonder at this! It is the way of the world that when a man has two salvers made for him, one for himself and one for his steward, whose salver does he have made more beautiful? Not his own? So Adam was created for the service of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the globe of the sun was created for the service of creatures. Does it not follow that the round of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun? And if the round of Adam's heel outshone the globe of the sun, how much more brightly shone the countenance of his face!

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama bar Ḥanina: The Holy One, blessed be He, joined together thirteen canopies⁵⁵ over Adam in the Garden of Eden, as evident from the verse "Thou wast in Eden the garden of God;⁵⁶ every kind of precious stone was thy covering, the carnelian, the topaz, and the emerald, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the carbuncle, and the smaragd, and gold," etc. (Ezek. 28:13). According to R. Simeon ben Lakish, it was eleven canopies. And according to the Rabbis, ten. The Amoraim do not differ [as to the verse from which the numbers are inferred, but differ only as to

55. Either canopied seats (cf. Piska 37.1) or bridal canopies which God provided for Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, the canopies symbolizing the glory and splendor of the world as it might have been had Adam and Eve not listened to the serpent and fallen into sin. After their sin the canopies disappeared, the light of Adam's countenance was gone, and his height, which made him tower above all creatures, was diminished (see Piska 15.3).

56. Though the words are addressed to the Prince of Tyre, the reference to "Eden the garden of God," with which Tyre is compared, permits the commentator to regard the passage as an account of the distinctions lavished by God upon Adam in the Garden of Eden.

the numbers themselves]. For he who maintains that the canopies were thirteen understands the phrases "every kind of precious stone," "and gold," and "was thy covering" as intimating that [out of precious stones not specified by Ezekiel but listed in the Book of Exodus] God made three additional canopies [besides one of gold].⁵⁷ He who maintains that the canopies were eleven takes the phrase "every kind of precious stone" as intimating one additional canopy⁵⁸ [besides the canopy of gold]. And he who maintains that the canopies were ten understands the reference to "every precious stone" as a general statement not intimating any additional canopy.⁵⁹ Yet despite the splendor that was bestowed upon Adam, [he was told] "For dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen. 3:19).

And the [splendid] strength of his face is changed (Eccles. 8:1). For after Adam had sinned and said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree" (Gen. 3:12), the Holy One, blessed be He, indeed changed his face and banished him from the Garden of Eden, as is said "The Lord God sent him forth from the Garden of Eden" (Gen. 3:23).

Another comment: *Who is as the wise man?* That is, as Israel, of whom it is said "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deut. 4:6). *And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?* It is Israel who know how to interpret the Torah with its forty-nine modes of determining what is unclean (forbidden) and its forty-nine modes of determining what is clean (permitted). *A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine.* R. Zakkai⁶⁰ of Shaab taught in the name of R. Sam-

57. Thirteen in all: nine canopies made out of the nine stones mentioned by Ezekiel; three more which God made out of the jacinth, agate, and amethyst, listed among the 12 stones in the High Priest's breastplate (Exod. 39:12), these three, according to R. Levi, being alluded to in the vague phrase "every kind of precious stone"; and a thirteenth canopy made out of "the gold." So Friedmann in his n. 74.

58. Perhaps he understands the phrase to say that one canopy was made out of a combination of the nine precious stones which Ezekiel lists.

59. He regards the phrase "every kind of precious stone" as intended to introduce the detailed specifying of stones which follows. See Lev. Rabbah 20:2 (M, pp. 446-47).

60. "R. Zakkai"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Yannai."

uel bar Nahman: You find that when Israel stood at Mount Sinai and said: *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7), something of the splendor of God's presence was bestowed upon them, as is said "And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect, through My splendor which I had put upon thee" (Ezek. 16:14). But when they said to a molten calf, "This is thy God, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt" (Exod. 32:8), and thereby became hateful⁶¹ to the Holy One, blessed be He, then, as Scripture says, *The [splendid] strength of his face is changed (yšwn')*⁶²—that is, the face of Israel "is hated" (*yšwnh*), the *š*in being read as a *sin*. Indeed the Holy One, blessed be He, [after having said "Ye are godlike beings (Ps. 82:6) who will live forever],"] changed His plans concerning them and concluded the verse by saying "Surely ye shall die like men" (Ps. 82:7).⁶³

Another comment: *Who is as the wise man?* (Eccles. 8:1). He who is a disciple of the wise. *Who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?*—that is, he knows how to explain what he has learned. *A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine* when he is asked a question and is able to answer. *And the strength of his face is changed* when he is asked a question and is unable to answer it.

From the teacher's seat Rabbi [Judah] posed the problem: What is the proof from Scripture that a negative command is violated when a substitute is designated for a firstling?⁶⁴ There-

61. "thereby became hateful"—so David Luria in his *Novellae* on Eccles. Rabbah 8:3. PE: "they were declared haters of."

62. The Biblical spelling *yšwn'* for "changed" is an uncommon one—the regular spelling is *yšwnh*; hence the inference.

63. See Piska 1.2; and Meq, 2, 272.

64. When a man substitutes one unblemished animal for another already designated as an offering for the altar, both animals are considered holy. The substituted animal cannot, however, be offered on the altar as an offering and is to be kept in pasture until it suffers a blemish, at which time it may be used for the general maintenance of the Temple. In the meantime the man who made the substitution has violated a negative command, since animals which are not blemished may not be given for general maintenance of the Temple. Such may

upon the face of [R. Judah] bar Pedaiah⁶⁵ lighted up and shone, and Rabbi [Judah] said: This one⁶⁶ senses the special reading of the verse which I posed as a problem from the teacher's seat.

A heathen saw R. Judah bar Il'a'i—saw him with his face aglow—and said: "One of three things is true of that man: Either he is drunk with wine, or he lends money upon interest, or he raises swine."⁶⁷ R. Judah bar Il'a'i, overhearing the heathen's remark, said to him: "May the breath of life in that man be blown out of him, for not one of these things is true of me. I do not raise swine, since it is forbidden for a Jew to raise swine, as we are taught in a Mishnah, 'A man may not raise swine anywhere'⁶⁸ (BK 7:7). Nor do I lend money upon interest, for it is written *Thou shalt not lend upon interest to thy brother: interest of money, interest of victuals, interest of any thing that is lent upon interest* (Deut. 23:20). Nor am I drunk with wine: The four cups of wine which I drink on the eve of Passover make me feel from Passover to the Feast of Weeks as though I had a tight cord around my head."⁶⁹ (For the same reason R. Mana used to feel from Passover to Tabernacles that there was a tight cord around his head). The heathen asked: "Why then does your face shine?" He replied: "It is instruction

be given only as offerings for the altar. See Lev. 27:9-11 and 22:17-20; Tem 1:1, B.Tem 7b; Lev. 22:23 and B.Pes 42a.

But Scripture has not clearly prohibited the substitution of another animal for a firstling, as it clearly prohibits substitution for an animal designated as an offering.

However, in P.Naz 5:1, 53d, where the encounter between Rabbi [Judah] and Bar Pedaiah is given in fuller form, Rabbi [Judah] says that the word *l'mr*, "saying," at the end of Lev. 22:17, is to be construed as though it read *l'w 'mur*, meaning "a negative prohibition [of the attempt to substitute for a firstling] is here intended." When R. [Judah] saw Bar Pedaiah's face aglow, he surmised that Bar Pedaiah was aware of this subtle exegetical turn of the verse.

65. So Parma MS; PE: "Bar Pedaion."

66. Reading not *h'kyn*, which is apparently a typographical error, but *h'dyn*, "this one."

67. Both immensely profitable occupations.

68. Whether in or out of the Land of Israel.

69. Literally "his head is tied up." The word *tzyk* is read *h'zyk*, as in Parma MS. See also Jastrow, p. 445a.

in Torah which makes my face shine, as is written *A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine.*"

R. Abbahu went to Caesarea and returned from there, his face shining. The disciples saw him, and came and told R. Johanan: "Imagine, R. Abbahu found a treasure!" R. Johanan asked: "How do you know?" They replied: "Because his face is shining." He said to them: "May it not be that he heard a new interpretation of Torah?" When R. Abbahu came in to see him, R. Johanan asked him: "What new interpretation of Torah have you heard?" R. Abbahu replied: "Something in an ancient Tosefta." R. Abbahu recited it, and R. Johanan applied to him the verse *A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine.*

Another comment: *Who is as the wise man?* As the wise Moses, of whom it is said, "A wise man scalesh the city of the mighty" (Prov. 21:22). *And who knoweth the interpretation of a thing?* Moses, for he interpreted the written Torah to Israel [in the light of Oral Law]. *A man's wisdom maketh his face to shine.* R. Mana of Shaab said in the name of R. Joshua of Siknin who said in the name of R. Levi: With each and every command which God would utter to Moses, He would tell him under what circumstances persons or objects could become ritually unclean and how they could be purified. When He reached, however, the section of Scripture that reads *Speak unto the priests the sons of Aaron . . . There shall none defile himself for the dead* (Lev. 21:1), Moses asked God to His face: "Master of the universe, but if a priest does become ritually unclean, by what means can he be made pure?" God gave him no answer, and in that instant Moses' face grew pale. As Scripture says, *The strength of his face is changed.* However, when God reached the section of Scripture dealing with the Red Heifer (Num. 19), the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: When I uttered to thee the command, *Speak to the priests . . . There shall none defile himself*, thou didst ask me, "If the priests become ritually unclean, by what means can they be made pure?" and I did not answer thee. Now, however, I give thee the answer:

*And for the unclean*⁷⁰ *they shall take of the ashes of the burning of the purification from sin* (Num. 19:17).

11. <Another comment: *This is the statute of the Torah which the Lord hath commanded, saying: Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring thee a Red Heifer* (Num. 19:2).> [These words are to be considered in the light of the verse] *Moses and Aaron among His priests, and Samuel among them that call upon His name* (Ps. 99:6). R. Yudan said in the name of R. Jose—son of R. Judah the son of Berechiah—who said in the name of R. Joshua ben Kōrḥah: During all the forty years that Israel were in the wilderness, Moses did not hold back from serving in the office of the High Priest, for Scripture says, *Moses and Aaron among His priests*. R. Berechiah, citing R. Simon, inferred Moses' serving as High Priest from the verse *The sons of Amram: Aaron and Moses; and Aaron was separated, that he should be sanctified as most holy . . . So, too, Moses the man of God. His sons, however, are named among the Tribe of Levi* (1 Chron. 23:13-14). <Note that Moses is called *the man of God*;> his sons, however, are identified simply as *among the Tribe of Levi*. R. Eliezer son of R. Jose taught: We have a tradition⁷¹ that Moses, in a white linen garment, served as High Priest in the wilderness.⁷²

R. Tanḥum son of R. Yudan said: Concerning his serving as High Priest we have a Baraita:⁷³ On every one of the seven days of the priests' investiture Moses served as High Priest, but it was not through his agency that the Presence came down to dwell in the world. When Aaron came and ministered, however, the Presence came down through his agency. Of the eighth day, when Moses summoned Aaron to the office of High

70. The word *the* in the phrase "*the unclean*" is taken to mean "the one that is known," i.e. "the one previously referred to."

71. So rendered in Lev. Rabbah M, p. 227.

72. That is, only Aaron and his sons were enjoined to wear the garments of priesthood, but not Moses. See Rashi on B.AZ 34a.

73. See Glossary.

Priest after the seven days of investiture, it is written *Today the Lord appeareth unto you* (Lev. 9:4),⁷⁴ [O children of Israel].

Moses and Aaron . . . and Samuel . . . called upon the Lord, and He answered them (Ps. 99:6). Moses called and was given an answer, Aaron called and was given an answer, [Samuel also, and was given an answer].⁷⁵ *He spoke unto them in the pillar of cloud* (Ps. 99:7). We heard of Moses that God in the pillar of cloud conversed with him, as is written *And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there* (Exod. 34:5), and of Aaron also that God in the pillar of cloud conversed with him, as is written *And the Lord came down in a pillar of cloud, and called Aaron* (Num. 12:5). But we have not heard such a thing said explicitly of Samuel. In what verse may we hear it said indirectly? In the verse *And they answered them, and said, he is; behold, He is before thee* (1 Sam. 9:12). The latter words mean, according to R. Yudan who cited Mari Jacob, that the women replied to Saul and his servant: Do you not see the cloud which always hovers above Samuel's courtyard?⁷⁶ Here the word *yš* ("He is") points to God's presence in the cloud,⁷⁷ for the same word is used in the verse *And so He was (yš) when the cloud was . . . upon the Tabernacle* (Num. 9:20).

Moses, Aaron . . . and Samuel . . . kept His testimonies, and the statute [book] that He gave them (Ps. 99:7). We hear of Moses that the Torah was inscribed to him with his name, as is said *Remember ye the Torah of Moses My servant* (Mal. 3:22). And of Samuel, too—a book of Torah was inscribed to him: *And Samuel's name . . . was inscribed in a book which*

74. See Sif, *Šēmini, Mēkilta dē-millu'im*, 14 (ed. Weiss, 44c).

75. That Samuel called and was given an answer follows from 1 Sam. 12:17.

76. "courtyard"—Parma MS. In search of the asses of Kish, Saul and his servant went looking for help from Samuel, the man of God. When they came to his city, they asked some young women whom they encountered to direct them to Samuel's home.

77. And 1 Sam. 9:15 goes on to say, *The Lord had revealed unto Samuel the day before Saul came*, etc.

was laid up before the Lord⁷⁸ (1 Sam. 10:25). But we have not heard of such an inscription for Aaron. We are taught, however, that the section concerning the Red Heifer was dedicated to him, so as never to be budged from connection with him—not from him, nor from his children, nor from his children's children, until the end of all generations.⁷⁹

12. *This is the statute of the Torah* (Num. 19:2). R. Joshua said in the name of R. Levi: The Impulse to evil tries to discredit four precepts, each of which has a notable exception: the precept concerning marriage with a brother's wife, the precept concerning proscription of "diverse kinds,"⁸⁰ the precept concerning the scapegoat, and the precept concerning the Red Heifer. In regard to each of these precepts, however, Scripture uses the term "statute," [a term with the connotation of a command that demands implicit obedience]. What is the exception to the precept concerning marriage to a brother's wife which states *Thou shalt not uncover the nakedness of thy brother's wife* (Lev. 18:16)? The exception is this: if the brother died without issue, his widow is permitted to marry his brother. In reference to the precept Scripture uses the term "statute": *Ye therefore shall keep My statutes* (Num. 18:26). What is the exception to the precept concerning proscription of "diverse kinds" which states *Thou shalt not wear a mingled stuff* (Deut. 22:11)? The exception is this: a linen cloak with woollen fringes (*ṣiṣit*) is permitted. In reference to the precept Scripture uses the term "statute": *Ye shall keep My statutes* (Lev. 19:19). What

78. In the translation of the verse I follow David Luria. JV: *Samuel . . . wrote it in a book, and laid it before the Lord.*

79. In n. 93 Friedmann suggests that the words *Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring thee a Red Heifer* (Num. 19:2) were addressed to Aaron. Thus only Aaron and his descendants were authorized to prepare the ash of the Red Heifer, an authorization taken by the commentator to be intimated in the concluding words of the verse in Psalms, *the statute that He gave them* (Ps. 99:7)—gave the priests, that is.

80. *Kil'ayim*, specifically, in this passage, the proscription of wearing cloth made out of a web of mixed wool and linen. See Jastrow, 638b.

is the exception in the precept concerning the scapegoat? The exception applies to him who sends the goat off: *He that letteth go the goat for Azazel shall wash his clothes* (Lev. 16:26) even though the goat itself is the means whereby others are washed clean of their sins. In reference to the precept Scripture uses the term "statute": *And this shall be an everlasting statute unto you*, etc. (Lev. 16:34). And the exception to the precept concerning the Red Heifer is what we are taught in a Mishnah: "All those who take any part in the preparation of the Red Heifer from beginning to end have their garments defiled" (Par 4:4); but the ash of the Heifer itself, when mixed with water, makes garments ritually clean. And in reference to the precept, the term "statute" is used: *This is the statute of the Torah*.⁸¹

13. *And the Lord spoke unto Moses . . . That they bring [the Red Heifer] unto thee* (Num. 19:2). Concerning this verse, R. Lulianos the son of R. Ṭibur⁸² taught in the name of R. Isaac of Carthage,⁸³ R. Azariah in the name of R. Isaac, and R. Jose the son of R. Ḥanina⁸⁴ also taught, as follows: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Moses, I reveal unto thee⁸⁵ the reasons for the precept concerning the Red Heifer, but to others [for the time being] it is a *statute*. For, as R. Huna taught, [God said], *When I take up My pledge of a world-to-come I shall give My reasons for the statutes I ordained*⁸⁶ (Ps. 75:3). God's pledge is to be found in the verse *And it shall come to pass in that day that there shall not be light; but heavy clouds and thick* (*wkṣp'wn*) (Zech. 14:6). Actually, the last word in

81. See B.Yoma 67b, and Rashi on Num. 19:2.

82. "the son of R. Ṭibur"—Parma MS; PE: *br kwbyrm*.

83. "of Carthage"—PRKB, 39a, n. 168. PE: *ḵtryky*.

84. "the son of R. Ḥanina"—Parma MS; PE: "Berabbi."

85. The initial verse is read *that they bring the Red Heifer*, [*the reason for which is revealed*] to thee.

86. IV: *When I take up the appointed time I Myself will judge with equity*. However, the word *šft* is taken in the sense of "give reasons" and *myšrym* in the sense of "statutes I ordained." Cf. MTeh 75:1; and Piska 8.4.

this verse is written *ykp'wn* ("will be perspicuous"), [so that the verse is to be read *there shall not be light; yet precious things will be perspicuous*]⁸⁷—that is, explanation of things concealed from you in this world will in the time-to-come be as clear to you as crystal. Thus it is written *And I will bring the blind by a way they knew not. I will make darkness light before them. . . These things have I done* (Isa. 42:16). Scripture does not say here "These things will I do," but *have I done*—that is, I have already done them for R. 'Aqiba and his colleagues. "Indeed," said R. Aḥa, "things which had not been revealed even to Moses were revealed to R. 'Aqiba, so that to R. 'Aqiba apply the words *And his eye seeth every precious thing*" (Job 28:10).⁸⁸

<That they bring THEE a Red Heifer (Num. 19:2).> R. Jose the son of R. Ḥanina said: This verse means that all [previously instituted practices concerning] the ash of the Red Heifer will be voided, but that which thou settest up will endure.⁸⁹

R. Aḥa taught in the name of R. Jose bar Ḥanina: When Moses went up to heaven, he heard the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, who sat engaged in the study of the section on

87. This reading is arrived at in the following way: The word *wkp'wn*, literally "and thickness," may be taken, as JV takes it, to be a noun whose meaning is coordinate with that of the previous phrase, "heavy clouds." But as actually written, *ykp'wn* is the verb in the clause of which "heavy clouds" is the subject. As verb its meaning is derived from *kp'*, "to be perspicuous." Since the noun *ykr*, previously rendered "heavy clouds," does not make good sense as the subject of such a predicate, it is read as meaning "precious things"—hence, *precious things [which are now concealed] will be perspicuous*.

88. Elsewhere in Rabbinic literature, Job 28:11 is construed as alluding to R. 'Aqiba. See *The Fathers According to R. Nathan*, tr. Judah Goldin, chap. 6 (YJS, 10, 42); and B.Men 29b.

89. I follow Friedmann who, in his n. 100, suggests that even before the days of Moses the people of Israel used the ash of a Red Heifer for lustration (see also *Samuel Krauss Jubilee Volume*, Jerusalem, 1936, p. 328). MC takes the passage to mean that throughout the succeeding centuries some ash of the Red Heifer brought to Moses will remain to mingle with the ash of other Red Heifers. See Piska 14.6.

In still another explanation it is suggested that some of the ash of Moses' Red Heifer, which during the Temple's destruction will be hid within the rampart of the Temple, shall in the time-to-come be discovered and used again. See PRKM, p. 73, n. 1.

the Red Heifer, citing a law in the name of the one who stated it: "R. Eliezer taught: The heifer whose neck is to be broken⁹⁰ must be [not more than] one year old; and the Red Heifer [not more than] two years old" (Par 1:1).

Moses asked the Holy One, blessed be He, to His face: Master of universes, worlds above and worlds below are in Thy domain, yet Thou sittest and citeest a law ascribed to flesh-and-blood!

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Moses, there will rise in My world a righteous man who will begin his instruction in the Oral Law with the section on the Red Heifer, and so I, too, say, "R. Eliezer taught: The heifer whose neck is to be broken must be [not more than] one year old; and the Red Heifer [not more than] two years old."⁹¹

Moses said: Master of universes, may the edict come forth from Thy presence that R. Eliezer spring from my loins!

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: As thou livest, it is ordained that he—R. Eliezer—be from thy loins. The words *And the name of the one Eliezer* (Exod. 18:4) intimate that R. Eliezer was the one teacher [who would begin his instruction in the Mishnah with the section on the Red Heifer].⁹²

90. See Deut. 21:1ff.

91. R. Jose bar Hanina assumes that its being the first Mishnah in Parah, the Tractate of the Red Heifer, is an indication that R. Eliezer actually began his instruction with this Mishnah. I am indebted to Professor Mordecai Margulies for the elucidation of this passage.

92. Since Eliezer was the second son of Moses, one would expect the verse to read "And the name of the second Eliezer." But the text reads instead *And the name of the one Eliezer*. R. Jose bar Hanina therefore assumes that in this context the word *one* hints that R. Eliezer (who lived in the first century C.E.) was, like Moses, deeply concerned with the matter of the Red Heifer; and also that R. Eliezer was a lineal descendant of Moses.

The following may help clarify the intention of R. Jose bar Hanina's exegetical *tour de force*:

Like God Himself (see above, R. Jose bar Hanina's statement in Piska 14.6), Moses is understood to have meditated deeply on the Red Heifer as a means of purifying Israel. Thus, after they had defiled themselves with idolatry, Moses used the powder of the golden calf, an anticipation, as it were, of the use of the ash of the Red Heifer, to begin Israel's purification (see Exod. 32:20, and below, Piska 14.14).

14. We are taught in a Mishnah: "Abba Saul said: The High Priests built the runway for the Red Heifer at their own expense" (Sheḥ 4:2). For not one of them used to lead his Red Heifer out on the runway built by his predecessors. Each one used to demolish his predecessor's runway, then rebuild it at his own expense.

R. Aḥa said in the name of R. Ḥanina: "Out of ostentatiousness, each High Priest spent as much as sixty⁹³ talents of gold on the runway." "But in a Baraita we are told of Simeon the Just, who [during his ministry] led out two Red Heifers,⁹⁴ that even he deemed it necessary not to lead out the second on the runway upon which he led out the first. Do you dare say that such a righteous man was ostentatious?" "Indeed not," as R. Abin explained in the name of R. Eliezer, "Simeon the Just did what he did in order to lend solemnity⁹⁵ to the preparation of the ash of the Red Heifer."⁹⁶

A heathen asked Rabban Johanan ben Zakkai, saying: The things you Jews do, appear to be a kind of sorcery. A heifer is brought, it is burned, is pounded into ashes, and its ashes are gathered up. Then when one of you gets defiled by contact with a corpse, two or three drops of the ashes' mixture are sprinkled upon him, and he is told, "You are cleansed!"

Rabban Johanan asked the heathen: "Has the spirit of madness ever possessed you?" He replied: "No." "Have you ever seen a man whom the spirit of madness has possessed?" The heathen

Now according to R. Jose bar Ḥanina, R. Eliezer was, like Moses, passionately concerned with the extirpation of idolatry, as evident from the fact that his instruction in the Oral Law began with the regulations pertaining to the ash of the Red Heifer; but in observance of God's precepts Moses' own children were a disappointment to Moses. One grandson, Jonathan, may have actually served as priest before Micah's graven image (see Judg. 18:30). Hence in saying that R. Eliezer was to spring from the loins of Moses, God meant to comfort him in his disappointment with his own children.

93. [Literally "more than 60." L. N.]

94. See Par 3:5.

95. David Luria suggests that the meaning is "in order to assure complete purity."

96. See Piska 7.1.

replied: "Yes."⁹⁷ "And have you not seen what is done to the man?" [The heathen replied]: "Roots are brought, they are made to smoke under him, water is splashed upon him, until the spirit flees."

Rabban Johanan then said: "Do not your ears hear what your mouth is saying? A man defiled is like a man possessed of a spirit. This spirit is a spirit of uncleanness, and Scripture says, *And I will cause the prophets of the spirit of uncleanness to pass out of the Land*" (Zech. 13:2).

Now when the heathen left, Rabban Johanan's disciples said: "Our master, you thrust off that heathen with a mere reed of an answer, but what reply will you give us?"

Rabban Johanan answered: "No matter how it appears, the corpse does not defile, nor does the mixture of ash and water cleanse. The truth is that the rite of the Red Heifer is a decree of the Lord. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'I have set down a statute, I have issued a decree. Thou art not permitted to transgress My decree.'"

<A Red Heifer (Num. 19:12).> Why are males specified for all [communal]⁹⁸ sacrifices, whereas a female is specified for the rite of the Red Heifer? R. Aibu said: "Consider this analogy: There was a maidservant's child who polluted the king's palace. The king said: 'Let his mother come and wipe up the excrement.'⁹⁹ In the same way the Holy One, blessed be He, said: 'Let the mother of a calf come and atone for the deed of the [golden] calf.'"

15. By *Heifer*, Egypt is meant: "Egypt is a very fair heifer" (Jer. 46:20). By *Red*, Babylon is meant, its king having been told, "Thou art the head of [red] gold" (Dan. 2:38). By *faultless*, Media is meant: what the Medians did was not their fault; the Holy One, blessed be He, had nothing against them, for the

97. "Have you ever seen . . . replied: 'Yes' "—Parma MS.

98. See Tem 2:1.

99. With Friedmann I delete the words "with what she keeps in her bosom," which follow in Parma MS as well as in P. These words do not appear in Elijah Mizrahi's citation of the parable in his gloss on Rashi to Exod. 29:1.

idols they worshiped were no more than those they had received from their ancestors. By *wherein is no blemish* is meant the kingdom of Greece: Alexander of Macedon, whenever he saw Simeon the Just, would stand up and say, "Blessed is the God of Simeon the Just." When his retinue reproached him, "Do you stand up in the presence of a Jew?" he would reply, "Whenever I go down into battle and see his visage, I am victorious."

By *upon which never came yoke* is meant Edom (Rome) which never accepted the yoke of the Holy One, blessed be He. And it was not enough that Edom did not accept the yoke—it mocked, saying: "Whom have I in heaven?" (Ps. 73:25). *And ye shall give [Edom] unto God, who ministering like a priest will help [Israel],¹⁰⁰ and [Edom] will be brought forth outside the camp* (Num. 19:3). That is, God will begin by thrusting Edom's prince out of the great city [of heaven], out of His encampment. *And then [Edom] shall be slain before His face* (*ibid.*): "For the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah,¹⁰¹ and a great slaughter in the land of Edom" (Isa. 34:6). The latter words, according to R. Berechiah, refer to the slaughter of the great one¹⁰² himself, the princely counterpart of Edom (Rome) in heaven. *And the heifer (Rome) shall be burnt* (Num. 19:5), as Scripture says: "The [fourth] beast . . . was given to be burnt with fire" (Dan. 7:11)—*her skin, and her flesh*, etc. (Num. 19:5), that is, her rulers, her governors, and her commanders. And elsewhere Scripture says to Rome: "Thy riches and thy wares . . . thy calkers, and the exchangers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, with all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the heart of the seas in the day of thy ruin" (Ezek. 27:27).¹⁰³ According to R. Samuel

100. *Eleazar* is read as 'El 'ezer, "The God who helps." See Yalkuṭ, *Hukkat*, 759.

101. Bozrah, where the prince of Edom, mistaking the place for Bezer, a city of refuge, will flee. See B.Mak 12a; and PRKM, p. 75.

102. In the Hebrew, the phrase "great slaughter" may be read "slaughter of the great one."

103. These words addressed to Tyre are understood as referring to Rome. See Piskas 15:25, and 17:8.

bar Isaac, God meant by "all thy company" the following: Even those who were once of My company, but then went and attached themselves to thy company, they too "shall fall into the heart of the seas."

Another comment: By *A . . . Heifer* Israel is meant: "Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer" (Hos. 4:16). *Red*: "[The princes of Israel] were more ruddy in body than rubies" (Lam. 4:7). *Faultless*: "My dove, My faultless one" (Song 6:9). *Wherein is no blemish*: "Thou art all fair, My love; and there is no blemish in thee"¹⁰⁴ (Song 4:7). *Upon which never came yoke* (Num. 19:2), for Israel in the days of Jeremiah¹⁰⁵ did not take upon themselves the yoke of the Holy One, blessed be He. *And ye shall give her unto Eleazar the priest* (Num. 19:3), that is, unto Jeremiah, "of the priests that were in Anathoth" (Jer. 1:1). *And she shall be brought forth without the camp* (Num. 19:3): "Nebuchadnezzar . . . carried the people away into Babylon" (Ezra 5:12). *And she shall be slain before his eyes*¹⁰⁶ (Num. 19:3): "They slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes" (2 Kings 25:7). *And the heifer shall be burnt in his sight* (Num. 19:5): "And he burnt the House of the Lord, and the king's house" (2 Kings 25:9). *Her skin*, etc. (Num. 19:5): "And all the houses of Jerusalem, also the entire Great One's house, burnt he with fire" (2 Kings 25:9; Jer. 52:13). But why does Scripture use the phrase "Great One's house"? Because it has in mind a particular house, the study house of R. Johanan ben Zakkai where they used to acclaim the greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He.¹⁰⁷

104. Song of Songs is construed allegorically as God's courtship of Israel. See Piska 7.7.

105. "in the days of Jeremiah"—parallel in PRKB, 41a, and Yalkuṭ, *Huḳḳaṭ*, 759. The statement in Jer. 11:15, *The hallowed flesh is passed from thee*, is construed by Rashi and Kimḥi as implying that Jeremiah's contemporaries had even discontinued the rite of circumcision whereby their flesh was hallowed. See Piska 15.13, n. 79; and B.Men 53b.

106. MT: *face*.

107. By probing into the esoteric doctrines of creation and of God's throne-chariot (Ezek. 1). So *Yēfēh 'anaf* on Lam. Rabbah, end of *pēṭiḥah* 12. I am indebted to Professor Judah Goldin for the note and the reference.

And . . . shall take (Num. 19:6)—that is, the wicked Nebuchadnezzar shall take *cedarwood, and hyssop, and scarlet* (Num. 19:6), men such as Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah. *And cast it into the midst of the burning of the heifer* (Num. 19:6): "The flame of the fire slew those men"¹⁰⁸ (Dan. 3:22). *And a man that is clean shall gather up all the ashes of the heifer* (Num. 19:9). That is, the Holy One, blessed be He, will gather them up, for of Him it is written "He will set up an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the dispersed of Israel" (Isa. 11:12). By *man* in the previous verse is meant the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is written "The Lord is a man of war" (Exod. 15:3). By *that is clean* is meant the Holy One, blessed be He: "Thou that art of eyes too pure to behold evil," etc. (Hab. 1:13). *The ashes of the heifer* are the dispersed of Israel. *And lay them up without the camp in a clean place* (Num. 19:9)—that is to say, they will be assembled in Jerusalem which is clean.¹⁰⁹

And [the mixture of ash and water] shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel (Num. 19:9). In this world things are pronounced clean or unclean by the mouth of a priest. But in the time-to-come it will not be so. The Holy One Himself, blessed be He, will cleanse Israel of all their sins, and from all their uncleanness, as is said "And I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you" (Ezek. 36:25).

108. In n. 119 Friedmann suggests that the men who cast Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah into the fiery furnace might have been Jews.

109. Jerusalem's ritual cleanness was scrupulously maintained. See B.BQ 82b.

PISKA 15

SUMMARY

Israel's reckoning of time by the
moon; the advent of the new moon
in Nisan as the time of Israel's
redemption

At the deliverance from Egypt, God told Israel that henceforth the determination of the time of New Moons and festivals would be their charge. Indeed, God created the sun and the moon for the children of Israel to reckon time by their light. Thus, even as the cycle of the moon is thirty days, so the cycle of Israel's sovereignty is thirty generations, rising in strength for fifteen generations and declining in the next fifteen generations. But remember, says God to Israel, yours is the capacity to renew yourselves, as the moon, by which you reckon time, renews itself (Preamble).

According to R. Johanan, when the world was made, the orb of the sun was created to give light, while the moon was created to enable Israel to proclaim the sanctity of New Moons and New Year's Days. R. Ḥanina [ben Ḥama], while agreeing that when the world was created only the sun was intended to give light, maintains that the moon was created to divert the nations from worshipping the sun (Sec. 1).

R. Berechiah, however, said that both luminaries were created to give light, for God intended from the beginning that the nations of the earth should reckon the year by the sun, and Israel by the moon.

The verse *Thy wonderful works . . . and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward* (Ps. 40:5) is construed in several ways as referring to God's purpose in a number of things He did: (1) His purpose when He showed the future of Israel to Abraham was to make Abraham choose the yoke of the kingdoms. If Abraham had not chosen this yoke, Israel might not have endured in the world at all. (2) His purpose in intensifying sexual desire was to assure the

continuation of the race. (3) Though His purpose in offering the Torah to the nations was frustrated by their rejection of it, the result was that Israel's acceptance of it brought them a double reward. (4) His purpose, after 2448 years of His reckoning of time by the moon, was to turn the task over to Israel (Sec. 2).

In connection with the long awaited new moon of Nisan whose advent begins the time of Israel's redemption, the verse *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but desire fulfilled is a tree of life* (Prov. 13:12) is cited and is interpreted in several different ways: (1) The verse is taken as referring to a man who betroths a woman and weds her only after a time, or to a man who betroths a woman and weds her right away. (2) It is taken as referring to David who had been anointed king but began to rule only after a number of years, and to Saul who was anointed king and at once began to rule—a privilege vouchsafed to him because of his many virtues. The listing of Saul's virtues leads to a meditation on the consequences of sin: As long as a man refrains from sin, he is an object of fear and awe. The moment he sins, he is himself subject to fear and awe. In proof of this apothegm, instances are cited from the life of Adam, from the experience of Israel, and from the life of David, of Solomon, of Saul. Finally the verse *Hope deferred*, etc., is taken as referring to Israel before and after the advent of the new moon of Nisan—that is before and after redemption (Sec. 3).

God's messengers of redemption were Moses and Aaron, whom Israel asked for in the words *O send out Thy light and Thy truth* (Ps. 43:3) (Sec. 4). The redemption of Israel which led to Israel's separation from the nations is intended for the nations' good. When the nations improve and raise themselves, they, too, may expect to be redeemed. In the meantime, all Israel's activities are unique in comparison with the corresponding activities of the peoples of the earth (Sec. 5). The themes of Israel's recurring separation from God through sin, of God's enduring feeling of kinship with Israel, of His unremitting call to Israel, of Israel's response, and of God's dew of revelation at Sinai are found in allegorical interpretation of *I sleep, yet my heart waketh; Hark! My beloved knocketh: Open to Me, My sister . . . Yea, My head is filled with dew* (Song 5:2) (Sec. 6).

The verse *My beloved! . . . he cometh, leaping upon the mountains* (Song 2:8) is construed in a number of ways as referring

to the first and last of Israel's redemptions. Thus in the days of Moses, the "leaping over the mountains" is interpreted as God's shortening of the period before redemption, or as His disregard of the "mountains" of idolatry, or as leaping with joy upon the "mountains" which stand for the courts of the righteous. In reference to the days of the Messiah, the "leaping over the mountains" is interpreted as God's reckoning lands like Barbaria or Sarmatia, lands beyond the mountains, whither a single Jew might have been banished, as making up the total of seventy nations that Israel must serve in slavery as a prerequisite to redemption (Sec. 7).

Even as Israel, yearning for redemption, plead with God "Come hither! Come hither!"—*like a gazelle* (Song 2:9), He comes leaping towards them and looks down through the windows of heaven waiting to enter into Israel's encampment and say "I am the Lord thy God" (Sec. 8). Again, God leaps *like a gazelle* from synagogue to synagogue, from schoolhouse to schoolhouse, where His glory stands ready to receive and to answer Israel's prayers, where His glory *looketh in through the windows* (*ibid.*) from between the shoulders of priests, in order to say "May the Lord bless thee and keep thee" (Sec. 9).

The Messiah, too, will be *like a gazelle*, appearing to Israel and then disappearing. As Moses disappeared from Israel for three months, so the Messiah will disappear for forty-five days. In the meantime, *like a young hart*, God will stand behind the western wall of the Temple which will never be destroyed. Of Him in that time it is said He *looketh in through the windows* which signify the merit of the Patriarchs, and He *showeth Himself through the lattice* which signifies the merit of the Matriarchs. Then, at the new moon's advent, in some Nisan of the future, He will say again *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months* (Exod. 12:2)—that is, the time of your redemption.

The text goes on with accounts of the words and actions of God's messengers of redemption beginning with Moses and Aaron, continuing with Joshua and Eleazar, with Daniel and Ezra, and ending with Elijah and the Messiah. The signs of the Messiah's coming will be pestilence and all kinds of afflictions, culminating in the reviling of God by generation after generation (Secs. 10-15). The price of Israel's redemption is obedience to the precepts set down

by Moses in groups of sixty, or, according to another opinion, in groups of seventy (Sec. 16).

According to some authorities, however, when Israel were redeemed from Egypt, they were just as heathenish as the Egyptians, so that Israel's redemption was unprecedented in human history. It was an arbitrary act of God, requiring the plenitude of God's power residing in the seventy-two letters of His name. Only because Israel's stock was goodly did God redeem them. Indeed, because of Israel's goodly stock, God made a record of His nuptials with Israel at the advent of the new moon in Nisan—*This month shall be unto you the beginning of months* (Exod. 12:2)—even as a king marrying a woman of noble lineage orders in her behalf a record of the nuptials and of the date of her marriage. If Israel are worthy of God's love, the days that they count will be days of their waxing stronger and stronger like the moon's waxing to the full. But if Israel are not worthy, the days that they count will be days of their waning like the moon's waning (Sec. 17).

The keeping of the calendar, Israel's responsibility after their redemption from Egypt, is a task such as a king entrusts to a son only after he is grown up (Sec. 18). God's turning over of the responsibility for the calendar is so complete that He Himself abides by Israel's calendrical decisions (Sec. 19). Israel being a small nation, it is natural that she count by the moon. It is natural that large nations, such as Rome, count by the sun. The implications of reckoning time by the two heavenly bodies are considered in connection with the destiny of Israel and the destiny of the nations of the earth (Sec. 20). The mystery of the moon's changes was one of three things which baffled Moses, and God Himself explained it and showed him the procedure whereby the new moon's advent is to be determined (Sec. 21).

In another comment on the verse *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months*, certain similarities between the redemption from Egypt and the redemption in the time-to-come are considered (Sec. 22).

Since lambs were regarded as divinities in Egypt, when Israel took them for the Passover offering, Israel acted with a daring which was to stand by them at the crossing of the Jordan, even as it was to stand by them in the days of Haman (Sec. 23). By their

daring in taking the lambs sacred to Egypt, Israel took God unto themselves, a taking symbolized in subsequent years by the two lambs offered daily in the Temple (Sec. 24).

Israel's servitude under Babylon, Media, Greece, and Rome is prefigured in Exod. 12:2. From these several servitudes, Naṭrona the Supreme Guardian has delivered Israel and will deliver them again—not in haste, as in Egypt, for in the time-to-come *Ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight, for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rearguard* (Isa. 52:12) (Sec. 25).

PISKA 15

[PREAMBLE *]

The Parashah of *This*,
[the determination of time by
*the] moon, is to be yours*¹ (Exod.
 12:2).

Adored, blessed, exalted, extolled be the name of the King who is the King of kings, the Holy One who revealed a secret of His to Israel, saying to them: My children, the determination of the time of new moons and festivals is to be your charge. When you say yea, it will be yea; when you say nay, it will be nay. The secret of intercalating days and years is turned over to you—it is entirely yours.

R. Johanan said: What parable applies here? That of a great king who had a beautiful orchard in which all kinds of trees were planted. And he gave the charge of it to no one, to no servant, to nobody else in the world—the king himself took

* In Parma MS, fol. 161a-b, the following passage precedes Piska 15. The passage, not in PE, was copied from Parma MS into SPR, pp. 82-3.

1. JV: *This month shall be unto you.*

charge of the orchard. But when he considered that he had many sons, he proceeded to say to them: My children, before you came into the world, I myself to this very day had charge of the orchard. Henceforth, it is turned over to you—it is entirely yours.

The king is the Holy One. The children are Israel. The Holy One said to Israel: From the day I created My world, and for as long as you did not come into the world, I had charge of determining the times of festivals and new moons, and the secret of intercalation was Mine, for I decreed that lights *are to be signs for the festivals*, etc. (Gen. 1:14). Henceforth, the reckoning of time by new moons is to be your charge, and yours is to be the prerogative of intercalating months into years, of fixing the beginnings of months, and of proclaiming festivals.² And however you see fit to reckon, I shall always go along with you, for the prerogative is to be yours, and the secret of intercalation is turned over to you, as is said *The festivals of the Lord which you are to proclaim to be holy convocations* (Lev. 23:2). Note that the text emphasizes the word *you*—you, Israel, are to do the proclaiming.³ Hence it is said *the [determination of time by the] moon is to be yours*.

Another comment: *The [determination of time by the] moon is to be yours* (Exod. 12:2). R. Simeon ben Pazzi taught: What is implied by the verse *He appointed the moon for [lunar] seasons, yet by the sun is the time of its departure reckoned* (Ps. 104:19)? It implies that the Holy One created the sun and the moon only for Israel's sake, in order that the children of Israel might reckon time by their light.

So you find further that Israel is said to be like the moon. Consider: Even as the cycle of the moon is thirty days, so the cycle of Israel's sovereignty is thirty generations.⁴ At its birth the moon

2. See Piska 15.2, end.

3. Literally "*which you are to proclaim them holy convocations*. Read not 'tm, 'them,' but 'tm, 'you.'" In the Hebrew, the word 'tm being written defectively, only a change in vowels is required, to have the word read "you" instead of "them."

4. "so the cycle . . . is 30 generations"—Exod. Rabbah 15:26. For parallel see Piska 15.17.

beginning to rise in the sky is tiny. As it rises, it keeps getting larger until the fifteenth day. It stops getting larger on the fifteenth day, when, coming up full, it reigns over the world, all the world, and its light shines from world's end to world's end. Thereafter, the moon begins getting smaller and smaller, until at the end of thirty days it is put out altogether. So you find that Israel's course parallels the moon's. Abraham is said to be the beginning of the month—the *one of the month* (Lev. 23:24), words which suggest Abraham, of whom it is said "Abraham was one, and he inherited the Land" (Ezek. 33:24).⁵ Thus just as you count up from the beginning of the month till the fifteenth day while the moon gets larger as it rises, so you count up Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David, to Solomon, when the moon came to the full as it was ordained to do—the same Solomon of whom Scripture says *Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king* (1 Chron. 29:23), implying that Solomon reigned from world's end to world's end.⁶ Thereafter the moon kept getting smaller as it went down: Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joram, Ahaziah, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, down to Zedekiah, when the month came to an end and the moon was put out, as intimated in the words *And they put out the eyes of Zedekiah* (2 Kings 25:7).⁷ Thereupon the peoples of the world said: "The moon is now put out and dead. The righteous of Israel?—Israel is not to have renown or sovereignty again." Thus the heathen nations rejoiced when Israel were banished to Babylon.

But the Holy One does not permit the death of the moon, for the moon renews itself and after two days rises: and with her there rises the righteous man, namely, Ezra the Scribe, of whom it is said *This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was*

5. See Piska 40.5.

6. The phrase *the throne of the Lord*, which the commentator refuses to take literally, is thus understood to mean that Solomon's sovereignty, like God's, extended throughout the world.

7. See Piska 15.17.

a ready scribe in the law of Moses (Ezra 7:6). Hence Israel was able to say: Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; though I am fallen, I shall arise; though I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light unto me (Micah 7:8). This kind of renewal is yours (Exod. 12:2), [O Israel. Yours is the capacity to renew yourself as the moon by which you reckon time renews itself. As Scripture says], He appointed the moon for [lunar] seasons, yet by the sun is the time of its departure reckoned (Ps. 104:19).⁸

*This, [the determination of time by the]
moon, is to be yours¹ (Exod. 12:2).*

1. *He appointed the moon for [lunar] seasons; yet by the sun is the time of its departure reckoned (Ps. 104:19).* R. Johanan taught: When the world was created, only the orb of the sun was intended to give light. Since the defective spelling of the word *lights* in Gen. 1:14 indicates that only one light is meant, the verse actually reads, *Let there be a light*². Why then was a moon created? To proclaim thereby New Moons and New Year's Days. Nevertheless because the verse in the Psalm goes on to say, *yet by the sun is the time of its departure reckoned*, one is to set the instant of a month's departure—so taught R. Shela of the village of Tamarta³ in the name of R. Johanan—not at the moon's conjunction, [which often takes place during the day], but at a subsequent sunset.⁴ In support of such reckoning, Justa, com-

8. See Piska 15.1.

1. JV: *This month shall be unto you.* Exod. 12:1–20 is the lesson for Sabbath *ha-Hodeš*—the fourth of the four special Sabbaths (see Table of Scriptural Lessons, p. xv; and Meḡ 3:4). The portion which declares Nisan the first of the months of the year was appropriately read either on the last Sabbath in Adar or on the New Moon of Nisan if it fell on a Sabbath. See *Mishnah Megillah*, ed. Joseph Rabinowitz (London 1931), p. 101. See also Piska 10.1, n. 1.

2. One would have expected *m'urwt* the full spelling of "lights"; instead the spelling is *m'rt*, which makes possible the reading "light." After all, the commentator seems to say, it is only the sun which in fact gives light.

3. A townlet in Judea, B.Hul 62a.

4. Either the first or second sunset after the moon's conjunction. I am indebted to Professor Abraham Sachs of Brown University for elucidating the passage.

panion [of scholars],⁵ cited in the name of R. Berechiah the verse *They journeyed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the Passover the children of Israel went out* (Num. 33:3). Now if one reckoned from the time of the moon[']s conjunction, there would have been fifteen days prior to the day on which they went out]. Actually there were only fourteen days.⁶ The fact that the text speaks of the day on which they journeyed from Rameses as the fifteenth day of the first month proves that we set the instant of a month's departure not at the moon's conjunction but at the first sunset that follows.

R. Ze'era said in the name of R. Ḥanina [ben Ḥama]:⁷ When the world was created, only the orb of the sun was intended to give light. Since the defective spelling of the word *lights* in Gen. 1:14 indicates that only one luminary is meant, the verse actually reads, *Let there be a light*. Why, then, was a moon created? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that the nations of the earth were to arise and worship heavenly luminaries as

5. "Justa . . . [of scholars]"—Parma MS, which has *Hbrh*. Justa was an unordained scholar. The name is an abbreviation of Justice or Justinus.

6. There is a tradition that the first of Nisan, the month during which the children of Israel left Egypt, fell on a Wednesday evening and Thursday, while the actual conjunction had occurred after the noon hour on Wednesday. It is assumed that when the conjunction takes place before evening, the moon will not be visible until the second evening following—in this instance the evening of Friday. Hence if we reckon as one day the period between the moment of conjunction on Wednesday afternoon and the onset of evening on Wednesday, and reckon Wednesday evening and Thursday as the second day, then Scripture should have designated the day on which the children of Israel left Egypt as the sixteenth day of Nisan, and should have designated the preceding day when the Passover was offered as the fifteenth day.

If, on the other hand, we reckon the month as beginning only when the new moon becomes visible, then there would have been only 13 sunsets—days, that is—up to the Thursday on which the children of Israel left Egypt.

Since we are told, however, that there were 14 days, neither of the alternatives above serves and we must conclude that the month's beginning was reckoned from the first sunset after the conjunction—that is, the first day of the month began at sunset on Wednesday evening. The parallel in Gen. Rabbah TA, 6:1, p. 40, reads: "but if you count by the moon[']s visibility] there were only 13 sunsets." See also MTeh 104:16; and Piska 15.21.

7. "Ḥanina [ben Ḥama]"—Parma MS; PE: "Hanania."

deities, and so He said: If the nations of the earth are to worship luminaries as deities, let them at least divide their worship between a sun and a moon, for if there were only one luminary to worship, how much greater would their acclamation of it be!

No, said R. Berechiah in the name of R. Simon, [from the beginning] both luminaries were created for the purpose of giving light, as is said *Let them be for lights* (Gen. 1:15), and Scripture goes on to say, *God set them in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth* (Gen. 1:17). Furthermore, says Scripture, *Let them be for signs* (Gen. 1:14)—that is, for Sabbaths, described as “a sign between Me and you” (Exod. 31:13); *and for appointed times* (Gen. 1:14)—that is, times for festivals; *and for days*—that is, for days designated as first in the month; *and years* (*ibid.*)—that is, for New Year’s Days, God’s intention from the beginning having been that the nations of the earth reckon the year by the sun, and Israel by the moon: *The [determination of time by the] moon is to be yours* (Exod. 12:2).

2. *Many, O Lord our God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts which are to us-ward* (Ps. 40:5). According to R. Hanania bar Papa, this verse means: All Thy wonderful works and Thy thoughts were intended to make our father Abraham accept the yoke of the kingdoms—*Thy works . . . and Thy thoughts . . . us-ward* were for our sake that we might endure in the world. For the Holy One, blessed be He—so taught Simeon bar Abba in the name of R. Johanan—showed four things to our father Abraham: Torah, Temple offerings, Gehenna, and the yoke of the kingdoms. Torah: *A torch of fire* (Gen. 15:17); offerings: *Take Me a heifer* (Gen. 15:9); Gehenna: *Behold a smoking furnace* (Gen. 15:17); the yoke of the kingdoms: *Lo, a dread, even a great darkness* (Gen. 15:12).⁸ The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Abraham, as long as thy children busy themselves with the first two of these, they will be saved from the other two. As long as thy children busy themselves with Torah and with offerings, they will be saved from

8. See Piska 33.6; MTeh 38:2, 52:8.

Gehenna and from the yoke of the kingdoms. Since it is ordained, however, that the Temple will be destroyed and offerings will cease, what wouldst thou have? That thy children go down into Gehenna or come under the yoke of the kingdoms?

Of his own volition, according to R. Hanina bar Papa, Abraham chose the yoke of the kingdoms. And the proof? The verse *How should one chase a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight, except their rock had given them over?* (Deut. 32:30), the rock being Abraham, of whom it is said "Look unto the rock whence ye were hewn" (Isa. 51:2). And since the verse in Deuteronomy concludes with the words *and the Lord had delivered them up*, the implication is that the Holy One, blessed be He, agreed with Abraham's choice.

All that day, R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi, Abraham sat wondering to himself and asking: "Which shall I choose for my children, since Gehenna is cruel, and the yoke of the kingdoms is cruel?" The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Abraham, how long wilt thou sit and wonder? Cut short the deliberation in thy heart." Of God's declaration to Abraham it is written *In that day the Lord cut short Abram [in the matter of] a covenant, saying* (Gen. 15:18). In this context what does *saying* imply? ⁹ According to R. Hanina bar Papa, that God was telling Abraham to make the yoke of the kingdoms his choice. But now we come to a difference of opinion. For R. Yudan, R. Idi, R. Hama bar Hanina, [in the name of] a certain elder, who cited Rabbi, maintained that the Holy One Himself, blessed be He, chose for Abraham the yoke of the kingdoms.¹⁰ The proof? The verse *Thou hadst caused men to ride over our heads* (Ps.

9. According to R. 'Aqiba, whenever the term "saying" occurs a second time in a chapter, as here, it is to be taken as having a special meaning, "requiring exposition." See Sif, *Nafo*, 2 (ed. Horovitz, p. 5, and n.).

10. In the following verses, ten nations are listed as being given over to the children of Abraham, three more than the seven in the land of Canaan. The surrender of the three additional ones is understood as taking place at the end of time. Prior to that they would oppress Israel, their oppression of Israel being tantamount to Gehenna from which Israel through God's intercession were to escape. The commentator thus demonstrates the wonderful works and thoughts which are to us-ward.

66:12)—that is, Thou hadst brought it about that the nations who rode over us bowed us to the yoke, instead of bringing it about that *we went through fire and through water* (*ibid.*), [through Gehenna].

R. Ḥanina bar Papa made another comment: The verse in the Psalm refers to all the wonderful works and thoughts which Thou didst employ to have a man feel the need for intercourse with his wife. Of this need it is written *And Adam knew his wife yet more* (Gen. 4:25). What is implied by Scripture saying *yet more*? That even stronger desire had been added to his previous desire. Formerly he had not felt desire when he did not see his wife; but now he felt desire for her whether he saw her or did not see her.¹¹

Here we have a hint to merchants and seafarers—so said R. Abba bar Yudan in the name of R. Aḥa—that [after returning from a voyage] they should remember to repair immediately to their homes.

R. Ḥanina bar Papa made still another comment. R. Ḥanina bar Papa said: The verse in the Psalm refers to all the wonderful works and thoughts which Thou didst employ to have the nations of the earth accept Thy Torah, even though it was already known and revealed to Thee that they would not accept it. Why then didst Thou go through the motions of going around and pressing it upon them? ¹² In order to double for us the reward we are to be given for accepting it.

Another comment: ¹³ R. Simon said: The verse speaks of Thy thoughts *which are to us-ward* in matters of calendrical reckoning. During each of the two thousand and four hundred and forty-eight years before the children of Israel went out of Egypt, the Holy One, blessed be He, used to sit reckoning the calendar, making intercalations, proclaiming the days on which the new years were to commence and announcing the beginning of

11. See Gen. Rabbah 23:5. According to Rabbinic tradition Adam lived apart from Eve for 130 years.

12. See Piska 21:3.

13. "Another comment"—Parma MS; PE: "for."

months—until Israel went out of Egypt, when He turned these matters over to them, as is said *And the Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron . . . saying: This month shall be unto you* (Exod. 12:1-2). What is implied in *saying*? That He said to them: Henceforth such calendar matters as the determination of time by the beginning of months is turned over to you.

3. R. Hiyya bar Abba began his discourse by quoting *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick; but desire fulfilled is a tree of life* (Prov. 13:12). The words *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick* refer to a man who betroths a woman and weds her only after a time; *but desire fulfilled is a tree of life* refers to a man who betroths a woman and weds her right away.

Another comment: *Hope deferred*, etc., refers to David who had been anointed king but began to rule only after a number of years. *But desire fulfilled is a tree of life* refers to Saul who was anointed king and at once began to rule. Through what merit? Through the merit of the good deeds he owned. For he was a humble man;¹⁴ he observed the Levitical precautions of purity even when he ate common food;¹⁵ he spent his own money freely in order to save money for Israel;¹⁶ he deemed the honor of his servant equal to his own honor.¹⁷ Besides, taught R. Judah bar Nahman in the name of Resh Lakish, Saul was a scholar in Torah—*By me*, [says Torah], *kings reign* (Prov. 8:15).

R. Ishmael taught: As long as a man refrains from sin, he is an object of fear and awe. The moment¹⁸ he sins, he is himself subject to fear and awe. So, before Adam sinned, God's voice sounded gentle to him; after he sinned it sounded harsh to him.

14. Of Saul it was said: *Behold, he hath hid himself among the baggage* (1 Sam. 10:22).

15. See MTeh 7:2.

16. *He took a yoke of oxen, and cut them in pieces and sent them throughout . . . Israel* (1 Sam. 11:7). See MTeh 7:2.

17. Saul said to his servant: *Lest my father leave caring for the asses, and become anxious concerning us* (1 Sam. 9:5), thus putting himself and his servant on a par.

18. The words "that he sin not," which follow in P, are deleted as a gloss which failed to understand the meaning of the original text.

Before Adam sinned, it was usual for him to stand erect while he was listening to God's voice. Of this is it written *They used to hear the voice of the Lord God as [Adam] walked in the garden*.¹⁹ (Gen. 3:8)—here R. Abba bar Kahana's comment should be noted: The text does not really say "walked," but says "walked away," referring not to Adam but to God, who after Adam's fall hastened to walk away [toward heaven].²⁰ After Adam sinned, as soon as he heard God's voice he crouched to hide himself, as is said *And Adam and his wife hid themselves (ibid.)*. In that instant—so taught R. Alibu—Adam's height diminished and became only one hundred cubits.²¹

Before Israel sinned, what does Scripture say of them? *The appearance of the glory of the Lord was like devouring fire on the top of the Mount in the eyes of all Israel*²² (Exod. 24:17). The phrase *devouring fire*, according to R. Abba bar Kahana, means that seven realms of fire seemed to be devouring one another on the top of the Mount.²³ And Israel beheld and had no fear and felt no terror. But after they sinned, they could not gaze even upon the face²⁴ of God's intermediary.²⁵ Of their fear it is written *They were afraid to come nigh him* (Exod. 34:30).

R. Isaac bar Abin said²⁶ in the name of R. Ḥanina: Even God's intermediary suffered from Israel's sin. [Speaking of the time of the revelation at Sinai, Scripture says]: *Kings of [heavenly] hosts do flee, do flee* (Ps. 68:13). The text, as R. Yudan pointed out in the name of R. Aibu, does not say, "angels of [heavenly] hosts," but *kings of [heavenly] hosts*, that is to

19. JV: *And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden*.

20. See Piska 5.7.

21. Cf. Piska 46.2.

22. MT: *of the children of Israel*.

23. So emended by Jastrow (p. 179b). PE: *bss*, "were under one another." Mah on Num. Rabbah 11:3 cites the relevant phrases in Deuteronomy which suggest that the realms of fire were seven.

24. The words "of the ruler" are deleted, as in Parma MS.

25. Moses said of himself: *I stood between the Lord and you at that time, to declare unto you the word of the Lord; for ye were afraid because of the fire, and went not up into the Mount* (Deut. 5:5).

26. Parma MS continues: "in the name of R. Simeon who said it in the name of R. Ḥanin."

say, at that time kings of heavenly kings—even Michael, even Gabriel—could not gaze upon the face of Moses. But after Israel sinned, Moses could not gaze even upon the faces of angels of lowly rank: *For I was in dread of the [angels of] anger and hot displeasure* (Deut. 9:19).

Before the unspeakable business [with Bath-sheba] betided David, what does Scripture quote him as saying? *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?* (Ps. 27:1). But after the unspeakable business betided him, Scripture quotes Ahithophel as saying of David during Absalom's rebellion *I will come upon him while he is weary and weak-handed* (2 Sam. 17:2).

Before Solomon sinned, fearlessly he ruled even over demons, saying *I got me . . . Adam's progeny,*²⁷ *demons and she-demons* (Eccles. 2:8), that is, demons of both kinds. After he sinned, he needed to bring threescore mighty men who guarded his litter: *Behold, it is the litter of Solomon; threescore mighty men are about it . . . because of the dread in the night* (Song 3:7-8).

Before Saul sinned, what does Scripture say of him? *So Saul took the kingdom over Israel . . . and whithersoever he turned himself, he put them to the worse* (1 Sam. 14:47), that is to say, he conquered. But after he sinned, what does Scripture say? *When Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart trembled greatly* (1 Sam. 28:5).

Another comment: *Hope deferred maketh the heart sick*. R. Hiyya bar Abba said: Here the allusion is to Israel before they were redeemed. You find that after Moses came to Israel and told them, "The Holy One, blessed be He, said to me, Go tell Israel, *I will surely remember you*" (Exod. 3:16), they kept asking him: Moses, our master, has not the time of remembering us already come²⁸—*What is my strength, that I should wait? . . . Is my strength the strength of stones? Or is my flesh of brass?*

27. "Throughout the entire 130 years during which Adam held aloof from Eve . . . the female demons were inflamed by Adam and they bore" (Gen. Rabbah 24:6).

28. They expected redemption with the coming of each plague; but redemption did not come. See Deut. Rabbah 1:23.

(Job 6:11-12). So Israel asked: Is our strength the strength of stones? Or is our flesh as unfeeling as brass? But as soon as God said: "In this month ye shall be redeemed," they said: "A good prospect at last—*Desire fulfilled is a tree of life*" (Prov. 13:12).

4. *This month shall be unto you* (Exod. 12:2). R. Judah bar Nahman began his discourse in the name of R. Levi: *O send out Thy light and Thy truth; let them lead me* (Ps. 43:3). *Thy light* is Moses, of whom it is said "The skin of his face sent forth beams" (Exod. 34:29). And *Thy truth* is Aaron, of whom it is said "Thy Thummim and Thy Urim be with Thy holy one" (Deut. 33:8).

And there are some who reverse the meaning: *Thy light*, they say, is Aaron, "the messenger of the Lord of hosts" (Mal. 2:7); and *Thy truth* is Moses, of whom God said, "He is trusted in all My house" (Num. 12:7).

R. Isaac said: At the Red Sea Moses, seeing—"Seeing is the custom of his household"²⁹ (Prov. 31:27)—that he was not to enter the Land of Israel, did not say, "Thou shalt bring us in and plant us," but said, as Scripture tells us, *Thou shalt bring them in and plant them* (Exod. 15:17). Hence, in going on to say of Moses and Aaron *Let them bring me unto Thy holy mountain and to Thy dwelling places* (Ps. 43:3), the Psalm is referring to the boundaries of the Land of Israel which are as holy as the Land of Israel itself.

Another comment: *O send out Thy light and Thy truth*. That is, Moses and Aaron, through whom the Holy One, blessed be He, sent light to Israel so that they were redeemed from Egypt at the time referred to in the passage beginning, *This month shall be unto you*.

5. R. Levi began his discourse: *Ye shall be holy unto Me; for I the Lord am holy, and have set you apart from the peoples, that ye should be Mine* (Lev. 20:26). As for the latter part of

29. The members of Abraham's household were said to have been seers. See Gen. Rabbah 45:7. JV: *She looketh well to the ways of her household*.

this verse, it should be noted that R. Yudan said in the name of R. Ḥama bar Ḥanina and R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Abbahu: Were He to set apart the heathen peoples from you, the heathen peoples would have no hope of ever raising themselves up. For just this reason Scripture refers to the separation of Israel from the heathen rather than the separation of the heathen from Israel: *and have set you apart from the peoples, that ye should be Mine*. The point is that one who sets apart the good from the bad is likely to go back and seek to set apart more of the good. But once one sets apart the bad from the good, one is not likely to go back and pick over the bad that have already been set apart.

Howbeit in regard to the first part of the verse, R. Levi said: All Israel's activities are unique in comparison with the corresponding activities of the peoples of the earth—in their plowing, in their sowing, in their harvesting, in their gathering the sheaves, in their threshing, in furnishing liberally from their granaries and from their wine presses, in their counting and in their reckoning of time. In their plowing: *Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together* (Deut. 22:10). In their sowing: *Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with two kinds of seed* (Deut. 22:9). In their harvesting: *Neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest* (Lev. 19:9). In their gathering the sheaves: *When thou reapest . . . in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go back to fetch it* (Deut. 24:19). In their threshing: *Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn* (Deut. 25:4). In furnishing liberally from their granaries and from their wine presses: *Thou shalt furnish [the Hebrew servant] liberally . . . out of thy threshing floor* (Deut. 15:14). And finally in their counting and their reckoning of time. For the nations of the earth count years by the sun, but Israel count by the moon.

6. In connection with *This month shall be unto you*, [consider the verse] *I sleep, yet my heart waketh; Hark! My beloved knocketh: "Open to Me, My sister, My delight, My dove,*

My undefiled." *Yea, my head is filled with dew*, etc. (Song 5:2). The congregation of Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the world, *I sleep*—in lack of the Temple I am numb; *yet my heart waketh*, in houses of prayer and in houses of study. *I sleep*, in lack of Temple sacrifices; *yet my heart waketh*, through acts of mercy and charity. *I sleep*, in lack of God's commandments;³⁰ *yet my heart waketh*, ready to obey them. *I sleep*, in ignorance of the time set for redemption; *yet my heart waketh*, for redemption. *I sleep*, in lack of redemption; *yet my heart waketh*, waiting for the Holy One, blessed be He, to redeem me. Indeed, asked R. Hiyya bar Abba, where do we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, is actually identified as the heart of Israel? In the verse *God is the rock, my heart, and my portion for ever* (Ps. 73:26).

Hark! My beloved knocketh (Song 5:2), that is, Moses knocks, saying, "Thus saith the Lord: About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt" (Exod. 11:4). *Open to Me* (Song 5:2)—according to R. Jose, the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: Make for Me an opening in you, small as the eye of a needle, and I shall make an opening in you so wide that camps full of soldiers and siege engines could enter. *My sister*—My kin, that had themselves bound³¹ to Me in Egypt by two covenants of blood, the blood of Passover and the blood of circumcision. *My delight*, at the Red Sea—at the Red Sea they became a delight to Me when they said, "The Lord shall reign for ever and ever" (Exod. 15:18). *My dove*—for at Marah in the light of God's "statute and ordinance"³² (Exod. 15:25) Israel came to have the irides-

30. That is, such of the commandments as have been suspended for the duration of the exile.

31. Play on the word *'ahot*, "sister," and *'ahuy*, "akin," or "stitched together," two stitches being regarded as a completed act of sewing if done on the Sabbath. See David Luria on Song Rabbah and Shab 13:1. See also below, n. 67.

32. The words "statute and ordinance" spoken at Marah are taken to mean that in addition to the seven Noachide commandments, Israel were given laws concerning the administration of justice, the Sabbath, and the honoring of parents. The seven Noachide commandments, according to the scheme in this passage, dealt with idolatry, unchastity, bloodshed, robbery, meat cut from a living animal, castration, and diverse seeds. See B.Sanh 56b

cence³³ of a dove.³⁴ *My undefiled (tammati)*, at Sinai—at Sinai they became pure in My sight when they said to Me [in perfect trust], "We will do, and then hear" (Exod. 24:7).

R. Yannai said: The word *tammati*, read *tē'omati*, means "My twin," "My equal"—"I the Lord am not greater than Israel, nor is Israel greater than I";³⁵ but R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: As with twins, when the head of one of them aches, the other also feels it, so the Holy One, blessed be He, feels Israel's pain saying: "I am with him in trouble" (Ps. 91:15).

[After God revealed Himself at Sinai, Israel said]: *Yea, my head is filled with dew* (Song 5:2) [—the dew of the revelation—] of which it is said "The heavens also dropped" (Judg. 5:4), and also "My locks with the drops of the night" (Song 5:2). And again, "After Thou didst march away from the field of Edom" (Judg. 5:4), Israel said: "Yea, the clouds dropped water" (*ibid.*)³⁶

At what passage in Scripture [does that sequence of themes begin which commences with Israel's kinship with God (*My sister*) and ends with the revelation at Sinai (*My head is filled with dew*)]? With the passage beginning *This month shall be unto you* (Exod. 12:2).

7. *Hark! My beloved! Behold, he cometh, leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills* (Song 2:8). R. Judah, R.

33. The phrase "at the sea" is deleted as a dittography.

34. Cf. Ps. 68:13. The word *tammati*, "My undefiled," is deleted as a dittography.

35. The glory of the righteous being equal to the glory of God. See Gen. Rabbah 77:1, where the verse *There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun* (Deut. 33:26) is rendered, "There is none like God save Jeshurun"—save the upright.

36. The climax of God's love for Israel is the giving of Torah, symbolized by water; the dew may represent Scripture which is to be studied in the day, and "the drops of the night" the Oral Law studied in the night. See MTeh 19:7.

The dew may also represent the dew of resurrection which revived Israel at Sinai, when their souls departed from them. See Piska 20.4.

The reference to Judg. 5:4 implies the contrast between Israel and nations such as Edom. As against Israel's acceptance of God's Law, Edom spurned God's attempt to give it the Torah. It was even unwilling to comply with *Thou shalt not kill* (see Sif Deut. 343, and Mek, 2, 33). So God left Edom, His leaving being intimated in the words *After Thou didst march away from the field of Edom*. See Piska 21.3.

Nehemiah,³⁷ and the Rabbis differed in their comments on this verse, [though all agreed that the *he* of the verse refers to Moses].

According to R. Judah, the words *Hark! My beloved! Behold, he cometh* refer to the coming of Moses. When he came and said to Israel, "You are to be redeemed this month," they replied: Moses, our master, how can we expect to be redeemed now? Did not the Holy One, blessed be He, say clearly to our father Abraham, *Thy seed . . . shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years* (Gen. 15:13)? According to our reckoning, we have gone only two hundred and ten years.³⁸ Moses replied: Since He desires your redemption, He does not heed your reckonings. Instead *He leaps upon the mountains*³⁹—that is, He contracts the limits of the period before redemption and spurns your reckonings of years and times, saying: In this month you shall be redeemed. *This month shall be unto you.*

R. Nehemiah⁴⁰ said: *Hark! My beloved! Behold, he cometh*, that is, behold, Moses cometh. When he came and said: "In this month you shall be redeemed," they replied: Our master Moses, how can we be redeemed, seeing that the Land of Egypt is filled with the filth of our idolatry? He replied: Inasmuch as He desires your redemption, He will not look at your deeds. Instead, *He leaps over the mountains*—that is, He disregards the *mountains*, here signifying temples of idolatry, as in the verse *They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains*, etc. (Hos. 4:13).

And the Rabbis said: *Hark! My beloved! Behold, he cometh* means "Moses cometh." When he came and told Israel: "In this month you shall be redeemed," they replied: Our master Moses, how are we to be redeemed, since we own no good deeds? Moses replied: "Inasmuch as He desires your redemption, He

37. "R. Judah, R. Nehemiah"—so Parma MS; PE: "R. Yudan, R. Nahman."

38. According to the Rabbis, Jochebed, Moses' mother, was born at the time Jacob and his family entered Egypt; and she was 130 years old when she gave birth to Moses who in turn was 80 years old when he came to deliver Israel.

39. "He leaps upon the mountains, He leaps upon the mountains"—deleted, as in Parma MS.

40. "R. Nehemiah"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Nahman."

regards not⁴¹ your wicked deeds. But what does He regard? The righteous in your midst, such as Amram and his court."⁴² Here it is intimated that God leaps with joy upon the mountains, for *mountains* and *hills* stand for the courts of the righteous, as in the verse spoken by the daughter of Jephthah: *That I may depart and go down upon the mountains* (Judg. 11:37), [that is, seek out the Sanhedrin, the heights of justice].⁴³

R. Yudan said: *In a land that is not theirs . . . four hundred years* (Gen. 15:13) requires the following reckoning: Israel was in servitude [two hundred and ten years]; to these are added the [one hundred and ninety] years when Israel, though aliens, were not in servitude. Hence the total includes even those years when Israel were at ease⁴⁴ in Egypt.

R. Yudan and R. Hama taught in the name of R. Eliezer ben R. Jose the Galilean, and R. Huna taught in the name of R. Eliezer ben Jacob: *Hark! My beloved! Behold, he cometh*. That is, the king Messiah cometh. When he comes and says to Israel: "In this month you shall be redeemed," they will reply: "Our master, O king Messiah, how shall we be redeemed? Has not the Holy One, blessed be He, said that He would reduce us to servitude among seventy nations?" And the Messiah will give two illustrations of what God meant by His statement: If only one of you is banished to Barbaria,⁴⁵ and only another one of you is banished to Sarmatia,⁴⁶ He will consider it as though all of you had been banished. And since the kingdom of Rome levies

41. The passage in P, "He regards not your deeds. Instead *He leaps over the mountains*, that is, He disregards the *mountains*, here signifying temples of idolatry . . . Inasmuch as He desires your redemption, He regards not," is deleted in keeping with Parma MS as a dittography.

42. That is, the court founded by Amram who was Moses' father. See Piska 43-4.

43. Here a play may also be intended on *harim*, "mountains," and *horim*, "the Sanhedrin whose decisions instruct men as to what is just." Cf. Yalkuṭ.

44. The word *'yspīlyyh* is derived from *spatalē*, "rest" or "leisure." See Lieberman, *GJP*, p. 62.

45. Germania Barbara. So Jastrow, 190a.

46. The country extending from the Vistula to the Rha (Volga). So Jastrow, 999a.

troops from each and every nation, if even only one Cuthean ⁴⁷ comes and forces one of you into military service, He will consider it as though the entire people of Israel were conscripted. Hence in whatever month circumstances such as these occur, you shall be redeemed. *This month shall be unto you.*

8. *My Beloved (Dwdy) is like a gazelle* (Song 2:9). According to R. Isaac, the syllables *Dw dy* are to be read as two separate words. In the first Thou, O God, sayest to us, "*Deui, deui*,"⁴⁸ Come hither! Come hither!" In the second Israel replies to Thee: "*Dee, Dee*,"⁴⁹ God, God, Thou comest to us before we stir."⁵⁰ Indeed Thou comest *like a gazelle*, for, as R. Isaac observed, as a gazelle leaps and skips from tree to tree, from thicket to thicket, from grove to grove, so the Holy One, blessed be He, leaped from Egypt to the Red Sea and from the Red Sea to Sinai. They saw Him in Egypt, as is said *For I will go through the land of Egypt in that night* (Exod. 12:12). They saw Him at the Red Sea: *And Israel saw the great work*⁵¹ (Exod. 14:31). They saw Him at Sinai: *Moses . . . said, The Lord came to Sinai*,⁵² etc. (Deut. 33:2).

My Beloved is like . . . a young hart (Song 2:9). That is, said R. Jose son of R. Hanina, like the young of the gazelle. *Behold, He standeth behind our wall* (*ibid.*), [waiting to enter into our encampment], as is said "For the third day the Lord will come down" (Exod. 19:11). *He looketh in through the windows* [of heaven waiting to descend]: "And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, to the top of the Mount" (Exod. 19:20). *He show-*

47. I.e. Goth?

48. The Greek *deui* or *deuro* means "come hither."

49. Or *Thee, Thee*, the vocative of *Theos*, "God," in Greek.

50. I follow the explanation given by Mah and by B. Z. Bacher, '*Aggadot 'Amora'e 'Eres Yiśra'el* (Tel-Aviv, 5685/1925), 2, 1, 244, n. 4. Cf. also Piska 44.7

Saul Lieberman suggests that Israel's reply is "*Deuro, deuro*, do Thou come to us before we stir." See *Tarbis*, 27 (1958), p. 187. See also Shalom Spiegel, in *Studies of the Research Institute for Hebrew Poetry in Jerusalem*, 5, 284, n. 30.

51. The words "They saw Him at Sinai, for it is said *They saw the God of Israel* (Exod. 24:10)" are deleted, as in Parma MS.

52. JV: *from Sinai*.

eth Himself through the lattice (Song 2:9), as when God said, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:2), and went on, as we are told, *My Beloved spoke, and said unto me: "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away"* (Song 2:10). And with what words did He summon me? With "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:2).⁵³

9. Another comment: *My Beloved is like a gazelle*. R. Isaac said: As a gazelle leaps and skips from tree to tree, from thicket to thicket, and from grove to grove, so the Holy One, blessed be He, leaps from synagogue to synagogue, from schoolhouse to schoolhouse. Why? In order to bless Israel. Through whose merit? Through the merit of Abraham who was told to sit down [when God appeared to him] by the terebinths of Mamre, as Scripture says, *When the Lord appeared unto him by the terebinths of Mamre, he sat down at the door of the tent [of prayer and study]* (Gen. 18:1). For according to the *kētiḇ*, as R. Berechiah taught in the name of R. Levi, the last phrase ought not to be translated "when he was sitting" but "he sat down [in God's presence]." ⁵⁴ Thus it may be deduced that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: Whenever thy children come into houses of prayer or houses of study, they too may sit,⁵⁵ even though My glory remains standing. And the proof? The verse *God standeth in the congregation of [those who at the times set for prayer aver the sovereignty of] God* ⁵⁶ (Ps. 82:1). Note—so said R. Ḥagga in the name of R. Isaac—Scripture does not

53. The revelation at Sinai is followed by the command: *Return ye to your tents* (Deut. 5:27). The words *Rise up . . . and come away* may be linked by the commentator with that command.

54. The *kētiḇ*—the traditional spelling of Scripture—is not the present participle *yoṣēḇ*, which would imply that Abraham continued sitting, but *yaśāḇ*, which is taken to imply that when the Lord appeared unto him, Abraham, who had been sitting, was about to stand up, but sat down again at God's behest.

The commentator may have construed the expression *in the heat of the day* (Gen. 18:1) as referring to the time of day when the *Shema'* is to be recited.

55. In the Temple they had to stand. See B.Yoma 25b, and elsewhere.

56. That is, recite the *Shema'* at the times set for prayer. See Song Rabbah on 2:9, 2, and Ber 1:1-3.

merely say that God stands (*'omed*), but that God stands ready (*nissab*)—ready to receive and to answer.

R. Samuel bar R. Hiyya bar R. Judah [differed], saying in the name of R. Hanina: At each and every praise with which the children of Israel praise the Holy One, blessed be He, He sets His presence among them. And the proof? The verse *Thou art holy, O Thou that dwellest in the praises of Israel*⁵⁷ (Ps. 22:4).

Or a young hart (Song 2:9), that is, said R. Jose bar Hanina, like the young of the gazelle. *Behold, he standeth behind our wall* (*ibid.*)—behind the walls of houses of prayer and houses of study. *He looketh in through the windows*, from between the shoulders of priests. *He showeth Himself through the lattice*—from between the fingers of the priests.⁵⁸ *My beloved spoke, and said unto me* (Song 2:10): "May the Lord bless thee, and keep thee" (Num. 6:24).

10. Another comment: *My beloved is like a gazelle*. R. Isaac said: As a gazelle appears and then disappears, so [Moses], the first Messiah, appeared to Israel and then disappeared from them. For how long a time did he disappear? R. Judah Berabbi said: For three months. With reference to his absence and his reappearance it is written *And they met Moses . . . who stood [unexpectedly] in the way*⁵⁹ (Exod. 5:20).⁶⁰

R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi: Like the first redeemer, so the last redeemer; as the first one appeared before them and then disappeared from them, so the last redeemer will appear to them and then disappear from them. And for how long will he disappear from them? R. Tanhuma said in the name of R. Hama who said it in the name of R. Joshua, [and] R. Menaḥema said in the name of R. Hama bar Hanina: For forty-five days. With reference to this period Scripture says, *From*

57. That is, at whatever time they pray to Him. Cf. MTeh 18:29, 22:19.

58. As they extend their hands in bestowing benediction upon the people.

59. After Pharaoh issued the decree that no straw be provided for the making of bricks, Moses is said to have gone back to Midian (see Exod. Rabbah 5:19).

60. Parma MS and P insert here the paragraph given below, beginning "*Or a young hart*" (p. 320) and ending "the merit of the Patriarchs" (p. 321).

the time that the continual burnt offering shall be taken away . . . there shall be a thousand two hundred and ninety days (Dan. 12:11), and then goes on to say, *Happy is he that waiteth, and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days* (Dan. 12:12). These days, over and above the number given in the previous verse, to what do they refer? They refer to the period of forty-five days during which the Messiah, who will have appeared to them, will disappear from Israel again. [By way of testing their faith], where will he have them go? To the wilderness of Judah, some say; and some say, to the wilderness of Sihon and Og. Concerning the place he will have them go to, it is written *Therefore, behold, I will allure [Israel], and bring her into the wilderness* (Hos. 2:16).⁶¹ There he who believes in him will be content to eat saltwort and the roots of the broom, for in the wilderness *They pluck saltwort with wormwood; and the roots of the broom are their food* (Job 30:4). But he who does not believe in him goes and attaches himself to the heathen nations who will eventually slay him.

R. Isaac son of R. Marion said: At the end of the forty-five days, the Holy One, blessed be He, will appear to them and bring down the manna for them. How do we know? Because *That which hath been is that which shall be, for there is nothing new under the sun* (Eccles. 1:9), [and so Israel will again dwell in the desert]: *I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt; I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents, as in the days of the joyous feast* (Hos. 12:10).

Or a young hart (Song 2:9), that is, according to R. Jose son of R. Hanina, like the young of the gazelle. *Behold, He standeth behind our wall* (*ibid.*)—that is, the western wall of the Temple which will never be destroyed. *He looketh in through the windows*, that is, through the merit of the Patriarchs. *He showeth Himself through the lattice*, that is, through the merit of the Matriarchs. Take note that as there is a difference between a window and a lattice, so is there a difference between the merit

61. The context of the passage is messianic.

of the Patriarchs and the merit of the Matriarchs.⁶² *My Beloved spoke, and said unto me* (Song 2:10). And what was it He said? *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months* (Exod. 12:2).

My Beloved spoke, and said unto me: Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. R. Azariah asked: Do not the words *spoke* and *said* mean the same thing? No. The words *spoke unto me* mean that He addressed me through Moses in a ringing tone, and *said unto me* that He addressed me through Aaron in a soft tone. And what did He say to me? *Rise up*, make thyself ready, *O thou who didst cause Me to be loved*,⁶³ thou daughter of Abraham who made Me beloved in the world; *who madest Me fair*,⁶³ thou daughter of Isaac who made My name fair throughout My world when his father bound him on the altar; *and go away*, thou daughter of Jacob who hearkened to his father and his mother, as is said "And Jacob hearkened to his father and his mother, and went to Paddan-aram" (Gen. 28:7). *<For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone* (Song 2:11).*>* The words *For lo, the winter is past* refer to the entire four hundred years decreed for our ancestors in Egypt. And the words *the rain is over and gone* refer to their two hundred and ten years [of servitude].

11. In another comment the words *For lo, the winter is gone* are taken to refer to the two hundred and ten years [of our ancestors' sojourn in Egypt]; and the words *the rain is over and gone* to the time of their most bitter servitude in those years. But do not the words *winter* and *rain* convey the same idea? R. Tanhuma explained: The bitter part of the winter season is the cold rain [which lasts about eighty-six days];⁶⁴ the period of most bitter servitude lasted exactly eighty-six years, beginning at the time Miriam was born. Why, in fact, was she named Miriam? Because,

62. See Piska 12.5.

63. JV: *My love, My fair one.*

64. Beginning with the seventeenth of Heshvan and ending on the fifteenth of Shevat. See B.RH 14a and *Hašmaṭoṭ* of David Luria's *Novellae* on Song Rabbah.

as R. Isaac said, Miriam means "bitterness" (*mrr*), as in the verse "And they made their lives bitter (*mrr*)" (Exod. 1:14).

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of singing is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land (Song 2:12). The words *The flowers appear on the earth* stand metaphorically for Moses and Aaron.⁶⁵ *The time of singing*⁶⁶ *is come* refers to the season when plants are pruned or cut back, so that the phrase is interpreted, The time has come for the foreskin to be cut;⁶⁷ the time has come for the Egyptians to be cut down; the time has come for their idols to be cut out from the earth: "Against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments" (Exod. 12:12); the time has come for the Red Sea to be cut in two: "And the waters were divided" (Exod. 14:21); the time has come for singing the song at the Red Sea: "Then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song" (Exod. 15:1); the time has come for the Torah to be given: "O Lord, my strength is a song"⁶⁸ (Exod. 15:2), a verse interpreted by R. Bebai as implying "Thy statutes have been my songs" (Ps. 119:54), and by R. Tanhuma, as implying that the time has come for Israel to raise their voices in song to the Holy One, blessed be He: "My strength is a song to the Lord" (Exod. 15:2). *And the voice of the turtle (twr) is heard in our land* (Song 2:12). R. Johanan said: This means that the voice of him who led us with great skill through the turnings⁶⁹ (*tyyr*) of our journey was heard in the land, the voice of Moses, that is, "And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord: About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt" (Exod. 11:4).

< The fig tree drops [as into a grave] her unripe and sickly

65. In the parallel in Song Rabbah there is a pun on the words *nšnym*, "flowers," and *nšwḥwł*, "illustrious men."

66. The word *zamor* means both "song" and "pruning."

67. There is a tradition that after Joseph died, the children of Israel, determined to be like the Egyptians, gave up circumcising themselves, and before they left Egypt Moses circumcised them. See Exod. Rabbah 1:8.

68. The Torah is often called "strength." See Mek, 2, 22; and Piska 5:3.

69. "turtle . . . turnings" is an attempt to reproduce the original pun *twr* "turtle," and *tyyr*, "guide."

*figs, whilst the young grapes just formed from the blossoms on the vines*⁷⁰ *give forth their fragrance. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away* (Song 2:13).> In the words *The fig tree*, [that is, the house of Israel], *drops [as into a grave] her unripe and sickly figs*, the phrase *unripe and sickly figs* refers to wicked ones among the children of Israel [who spurned redemption]: their lives were brought to an end by God during the three days of darkness (Exod. 10:22), and then they were dropped into their graves.⁷¹ The rest of the verse, namely, *whilst the young grapes just formed from the blossoms on the vines give forth their fragrance*, refers to those among the children of Israel [whose deeds, though far from acceptable], had nevertheless the fragrance of repentance so that they were received by God,⁷² and remained alive [during the three days of darkness]. Thereupon Moses said to the children of Israel: So many good fragrances are within you, and yet you are still here in Egypt: *Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away*.

12. Another comment: *My Beloved spoke, and said unto me* (Song 2:10). R. Azariah asked: Do not the words *spoke* and *said* mean the same thing? No. The words *My beloved spoke* mean that He addressed me through Joshua in a ringing tone, and *said unto me* that He addressed me through Eleazar in a soft tone. And what did He say to me? *Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past*, that is, the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness. *The rain is over and gone*, that is to say, the thirty-eight years during which wrath lay upon Israel.⁷³ *The flowers appear on the earth*, that is, <the princes—"one prince of every Tribe to take possession of the

70. JV: *The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines in blossom*, etc. See Rashi.

71. The translation departs somewhat from the text of PR. But cf. Song Rabbah on this verse.

72. Cf. Exod. Rabbah 15:1, where *the young grapes just formed from the blossoms* are described as being in-between the completely righteous and the entirely wicked.

73. See Deut. 2:14, 16-17, and Rashi on B.Ta 30b.

Land" ⁷⁴ (Num. 34:18). > *The time of singing* ⁶⁶ *is come* refers to the season when plants are pruned or cut back, so that the phrase is interpreted, The time has come for the foreskin to be cut; ⁷⁵ the time has come for the Canaanites to be cut down; the time has come for the Land of Israel to be cut up: "Unto these the Land shall be divided" (Num. 26:52). *And the voice of the turtle (twr) is heard in our land* means, according to R. Johanan, that the voice of him who turned us (*tyyr*) with great skill towards the Land of Israel was heard in the land, that is to say, the voice of Joshua: "Then Joshua commanded the officers of the people, saying: . . . Go in to possess the Land" (Josh. 1:10). *The fig tree putteth forth her green figs* (Song 2:13), which are put on top of the baskets of first fruits.⁷⁶ *And the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance (ibid.)*—that is, the fragrance given off by the drink offerings.

13. Another comment: *My Beloved spoke, and said unto me*. R. Azariah asked: Do not the words *spoke* and *said* mean the same thing? No. *Spoke . . . unto me* means that He addressed me through Daniel⁷⁷ in a ringing tone, and *said . . . unto me* that He addressed me through Ezra in a soft tone. What did He say to me? *Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past*, that is, the seventy years Israel spent in exile. But in fact were they not fifty-two years?⁷⁸ R. Levi explained: Take into account the eighteen years [of Israel's anticipation of exile] during which a Divine Voice was to come forth and reverberate in the palace of Nebuchadnezzar, saying to him: Wicked servant, go forth, destroy the House of thy Master, for the children of thy Master do not hearken to Him. *The rain is over and gone* (Song 2:11), that is, the enslavement. *The flowers appear on the earth*, flowers such as Daniel and his

74. Parma MS and P: "that is, the spies—of every Tribe . . . shall ye send a man" (Num. 13:2).

75. Joshua circumcised the children of Israel when they entered the Land of Israel, Josh. 5:2.

76. See Tos Bik 2:8.

77. Daniel began rebuilding the Temple. See Ezra 5:16; and Piska 6.3.

78. JE, 4, 68, s.v. "Chronology."

companions, Mordecai and his company, Ezra and his company. *The time of singing*⁶⁸ refers to the season when plants are pruned or cut back, so that the phrase is interpreted, The time has come for the foreskin to be cut;⁷⁹ the time has come for the wicked to be broken and cut down, the time of which it is written "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked" (Isa. 14:5); the time has come for the Babylonians to be cut down; the time has come for the Temple to be rebuilt: "The glory of this latter House shall be greater than that of the former" (Haggai 2:9). *And the voice of the turtle (twr) is heard in our land*, that is, said R. Johanan, the voice of him who turned us (*tyyr*) with great skill towards the Land of Israel was heard in the land, the voice of⁸⁰ Cyrus: "Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth hath the Lord, the God of heaven, given me; and He hath charged me to build Him a House in Jerusalem, which is in Judah" (Ezra 1:2). *The fig tree putteth forth her green figs* which are put on top of baskets of first fruits. *And the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance*—that is, the fragrance given off by the drink offerings.

14/15. Another comment: *My Beloved spoke, and said unto me*. R. Azariah asked: But do not the words *spoke* and *said* mean the same thing? No. The words *spoke . . . unto me* mean that He addressed me through Elijah in a ringing tone, and the words *said unto me* that He addressed me through the Messiah in a soft tone. What did He say to me? *Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away. For lo, the winter is past*—that is, the wicked kingdom which enticed mortals into a wintry way⁸¹ has passed on, the wicked kingdom alluded to in the verse "If

79. Toward the end of the First Commonwealth the people of Israel were so sinful that they even gave up circumcising their children. See Piska 14.15, n. 104; and B.Men 53b.

80. "said R. Johanan . . . the voice of"—Parma MS.

81. In the Hebrew, there is a play on the words *stw*, "winter," and *syf* and *t'h*, "entice." The "enticing [into a wintry way]" may refer to the missionary activity of Rome after its conversion to Christianity, or in general to the political policy it pursued.

thy brother, the son of thy mother⁸² . . . entice thee . . . saying: 'Let us go and serve other gods'" (Deut. 13:7). *The rain is over and gone* refers to the enslavement. *The flowers appear on the earth*, the flowers standing metaphorically, as R. Isaac said, for the craftsmen in the verse "And the Lord showed me four craftsmen [who wrought deliverance for Israel]" (Zech. 2:3). These craftsmen are Elijah, the king Messiah, Melchizedek, and the priest who was anointed in a time of war [as the one who was to exhort the armies of Israel].⁸³ *The time of singing is come* refers to the season when plants are pruned or cut back, so that the phrase is interpreted, The time has come for the foreskin to be cut; the time has come for the wicked to be broken and cut down: "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked" (Isa. 14:5); the time has come for this wicked kingdom to be rooted out of the world; the time has come for the kingdom of heaven to be revealed: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9). *And the voice of the turtle (tvr) is heard in our land*, words which mean, according to R. Johanan, that the voice of him who will lead us with great skill through the final turnings (*tyyr*) of our journey is heard in the land, that is, the voice of the king Messiah: "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings" (Isa. 52:7). *The fig tree drops [as into a grave] her unripe and sickly figs* (Song 2:13). R. Ḥiyya bar Abba bar Simon said: In the days of the Messiah a great pestilence will come during which the lives of the wicked will be brought to an end by God. *And the vines in blossom give forth their fragrance* (Song 2:13). This verse refers to the ones that are left to live: "And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remaineth in Jerusalem shall be called holy" (Isa. 4:3). For the Rabbis taught as follows of the particular seven-year period at the end of which the son of David will appear:⁸⁴ The

82. Here taken to allude to Esau; hence Edom, which is Rome.

83. See Piska 8.4.

84. According to Yehudah Eben Shēmu'el, the idea of a seven-year period at the end of which the Messiah was to come is linked with the calculation that at the end of 85 Jubilee periods, that is after Anno Mundi 4250, the Messiah

first year—"And I will cause it to rain upon one city, and cause it not to rain upon another city" (Amos 4:7). The second year arrows of famine will be launched upon Israel. The third year there will be a general famine; during the year men, women, and little children will die, and [because of Israel's hunger] the Torah will be forgotten in the Land of Israel. During the fourth year there will be a scarcity of one thing and a surplus of another.⁸⁵ During the fifth there will be a great plenty and people will eat and drink and rejoice, and the Torah will again shine for Israel as when it was newly given.⁸⁶ During the sixth there will be rumors [of war];⁸⁷ and during the seventh, wars. And with the departure of the seventh, the son of David will appear.

Abbuha exclaimed: How many such seven-year periods have come, and yet the son of David has not come. Seven-year periods have nothing to do with his coming. The signs of his coming will be those that R. Johanan indicated: In the generation in which the son of David comes, disciples of the wise will die out; and as for those who remain alive, their eyes will be consumed with sorrow and sighing as they weep; and many agonies will afflict the entire people as harsh decrees are added one to the other, so that while all the former are still in force, another is proclaimed and is added to them.

R. Abin said: In the generation during which the son of David comes, the chamber where scholars are wont to meet for study will be used for harlotry, Galilee will be laid waste, the

was to be expected. A. M. 4250 corresponded to 447 C.E., a year which many believed would mark the end of Rome (in 433 C.E. Attila the Hun made himself ruler of Rome). In one of the seven-year periods, accordingly, in the eighty-sixth Jubilee, the Messiah was expected. See Yehudah Eben Shēmu'el, *Midrēše gē'ulah*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, 5714/1954), p. 45. See also Piska 1.7, n. 51.

85. Literally "scarcity and no scarcity, plenty and no plenty."

86. Klausner (*The Messianic Idea in Israel* [New York 1955], pp. 449-50) suggests that the temporary disappearance of the Torah from Israel is among the pangs of the Messiah.

87. Cf. Mark 13:7; Matthew 24:6. Or "[of thunderings]"; or "rumors [that the Messiah is on his way]." So Rashi on B.Sanh 97a.

Gaulan region⁸⁸ will be made desolate; the men of Galilee will go about from town to town and find no pity, men of truth will perish, and truth, banished, will go hence. Whither will it go? According to the School of R. Yannai, it will go and dwell among bands of hermits in the desert, as it is said *Truth shall be among bands*⁸⁹ (Isa. 59:15).

R. Nehorai said: In the generation in which the son of David comes, the young will insult their elders, and the elders will wait upon the young:⁹⁰ "The daughter will rise up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies will be the men of his own house" (Micah 7:6);⁹¹ and a son will not feel ashamed before his father.⁹² The wisdom of the Scribes will be deemed a stench. The vine will yield its fruit, yet wine will be costly.

R. Abba bar Kahana said: The son of David will not come except in a generation whose every member deserves extermination. R. Yannai said: The son of David will not come except in a dog-faced⁹³ generation.

R. Levi said: "When you see generation after generation revile God, look for the feet of the king Messiah." By what verse did he justify his comment? By the verse *When Thine enemies have reviled Thee, O Lord, when they have reviled—[then are] the footsteps of Thine anointed* (Ps. 89:52). And what words immediately follow? *Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen* (Ps. 89:53).

16. R. Jonah began his discourse by quoting the verse *The Lord said . . . "So I bought Me [Israel] for fifteen pieces of silver and a homer of barley, and a half-homer of barley"* (Hos. 3:2). And

88. East of the Sea of Galilee and of the upper Jordan. See I. Epstein's note in the Soncino tr., B.Sanh 97a.

89. JV: *Truth is lacking*. In this comment, 'dr, "lack," is taken in its other sense of "flock" or "band."

90. [Literally "the young will cause their elders to go pale (with shame), and the elders will rise (in deference) before the young." L. N.]

91. See also Matthew 10:35-36; Luke 12:53.

92. Cf. Amos 2:7.

93. Brazen-faced and brutalized. Cf. Soṭ 9:15, and Piska 1.7.

he continued with R. Johanan's comment on this verse: *So I bought Me [Israel] for fifteen pieces of silver—fifteen; a homer of barley, thirty⁹⁴; and a half-homer of barley—[fifteen, or] sixty in all,⁹⁵ a figure favored by Moses who set down precepts in groups of sixty in the Torah. For, as R. Johanan went on to say, citing R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, Moses set down for us in the Torah three passages, each of which is made up of sixty precepts: the passage concerning the Passover sacrifice,⁹⁶ the passage concerning damages, and the passage concerning holiness.⁹⁷ According to R. Levi who cited R. Shela of the village of Tamarta, each of the three is made up of a total of seventy, not sixty, precepts. R. Tanḥuma, however, stated that there was no real difference of opinion. For he who considers the passage concerning the Passover sacrifice as made up of seventy precepts includes within it the passage concerning tefillin; he who considers the passage concerning damages as made up of seventy precepts includes within it the passage concerning release from debt in the Sabbatical year; and he who considers the passage concerning holiness as made up of seventy precepts includes within it the passage on forbidden sexual relations.⁹⁸*

In another comment, the verse is read *So, [precious to Me on account of her] sterling men,⁹⁹ I bought Me [Israel] on the*

94. A *homer* is the equivalent of 30 *sē'ah*.

95. Since the commentator takes God to be the speaker, he construes the details of the price paid for adulterous Israel as hinting at the number of precepts whereby God covenanted His union with Israel—precepts which she violated. See Targum Jonathan and Kimḥi, and cf. PRKM, p. 206.

96. See Rödelheim *Mahzor* for the evening service of Passover, where in comments on 'Ezḳerah 'išnoṭ 'olamim the 60 precepts are counted. For a critique and correction of Rödelheim's enumeration see 'En Ḥanokh, in comment on Lev. Rabbah, chap. 24 (Midrash Rabbah, ed. 'Anafim [New York, 5717/1957], 1, end.

97. Exod. 12:1–13:10; Exod. 21:1–22:23; and Lev. 19:1–20:23.

98. I follow Friedmann's emendation. Parma MS and P read erroneously: "the passage on the fruit of trees in the first three years." In the Hebrew a slight change in the form of a letter could account for the error.

The previously cited passages in Exodus and Leviticus, together with the adjoining passages in Exod. 13:16 and Deut. 11:13–21; in Exod. 23:10–19; and in Lev. 18:7–18.

99. Literally *silver*, which in this comment is taken in the sense of "sterling" or "righteous men." See B.Sanh 96b and Hül 92a.

fifteenth, on the fifteenth day of Nisan. How do we know when? Because Scripture says, *In this month* (Exod. 12:2).

17. *This shall be a new experience*¹⁰⁰ *unto you* (Exod. 12:2). According to R. Berechiah, citing R. Yudan the son of R. Simeon, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, you are to have here in Egypt a new and unprecedented experience in redemption.¹⁰¹ In times gone by I redeemed no nation from the midst of another nation. But now I shall redeem a nation out of another nation, an act asserted in the verse *God hath assayed to go and take him a nation from the midst of another nation* (Deut. 4:34). R. Joshua bar Nehemiah, citing R. Ḥanan ben Pazzi, called particular attention to the phrase *a nation from the midst of another nation*, and declared that by not saying "a people from the midst of another nation," Scripture intimates that it was "one heathen nation from the midst of another heathen nation." The Jews were at that time uncircumcised even as the Egyptians were uncircumcised; the Jews at that time grew locks¹⁰² even as the Egyptians grew locks. Accordingly, the measure of justice would never have allowed Israel to be redeemed out of Egypt. Indeed, as Samuel bar Nahman said, had not the Holy One, blessed be He, bound Himself by an oath, Israel would never have been redeemed out of Egypt. And the proof of the oath? The verse *Therefore say unto the children of Israel . . . I will bring you out from under the burden*, etc. (Exod. 6:6); here *therefore* implies an oath, as in the parallel instance *Therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli*, etc. (1 Sam. 3:14).

Accordingly, R. Berechiah concluded: The statement *Thou hast redeemed Thy people with Thine arm* (Ps. 77:16) means, Thou hast redeemed them arbitrarily with the plenitude of Thy power. For, as R. Yudan pointed out, in the passage beginning with *to go and take Him a nation*, and ending with *and by great terrors* (Deut. 4:34) there are seventy-two letters, [the same

100. *Hdī* may mean "month" or "new experience."

101. The words "in the time-to-come" are deleted, as in MC.

102. Which at puberty were shorn and offered up to the deity.

number as in the name of God].¹⁰³ And if anyone says to you: "There are actually seventy-five," say in reply: You are to exclude the second occurrence of the word *nation*¹⁰⁴ which, [since it refers to Egypt], obviously cannot be included in the count.

R. Abin went on to say: God redeemed them with the fullness of His name, the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, with its seventy-two letters.

<*This month shall be unto you the beginning of months* (Exod. 12:2).> R. Joshua said: Consider the analogy of a king whose son was captured. The king, wearing the cloak of vengeance, went forth and redeemed his son. Thereupon he commanded: Count ye the years of the era beginning with the redemption of my son. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, <commanded:> Count ye an era beginning with the exodus from Egypt.

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama bar Hanina: Consider the analogy of a king who married many women, but did not order in their behalf a record of the nuptials or of the date of marriage. However, as soon as he married a woman of goodly stock, yea, one of noble lineage, he ordered in her behalf a record of the nuptials and of the date of her marriage. So in regard to all the women whom Ahasuerus married, he did not order in their behalf a record of the nuptials or of the date of marriage. But when he married Esther, a woman of noble lineage, he ordered in her behalf a record of the nuptials: *So Esther was taken . . . into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth* (Esther 2:16); also the year of her marriage: *In the seventh year of his reign* (*ibid.*).

<Just so, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: When I created My world, as the nations of the earth began to come into existence, I gave them no record of either month or week. But when Israel came into existence, I gave them both new moons and leap years. Hence it is said *This month shall be unto you the beginning* (Exod. 12:2).>

<With reference to *This month shall be unto you*,> R. Bere-

103. See JE, 9, 164, s.v. "Names of God."

104. In Hebrew, the word for "nation" (*gwy*) has three letters.

chiah cited the verse ¹⁰⁵ *David's seed . . . shall be established for ever as the moon* (Ps. 89:38). Like the moon indeed. If you are worthy, the days you count will be days of Israel's waxing stronger and stronger like the moon's waxing to the full. But if you are not worthy, the days you count will be days of Israel's waning like the moon's waning. When you are worthy, you count the days of Israel's waxing as the moon waxes to the full—the days of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah, Perez, Hezron, Ram, Amminadab, Nahshon, Salmon, Boaz, Obed, Jesse, David, Solomon: *Then Solomon sat on the throne of the Lord as king* (1 Chron. 29:23). Lo, the moon in its fullness! But when you are not worthy, then you count the days of Israel's waning as the moon wanes into darkness—the days of Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Zedekiah: ¹⁰⁶ *And they put out the eyes of Zedekiah* (2 Kings 25:7). Lo, the moon in utter darkness!

18. *This counting of the month shall be unto you* (Exod. 12:2)—that is, the counting will be turned over to you. Consider, said R. Joshua ben Levi, the analogy of a king who had a timepiece and turned the timepiece over to his son when the son grew up; or the analogy, said R. Jose bar Hanina, of a king who had an arm ring ¹⁰⁷ and turned the arm ring over to his son when the son grew up; or the analogy, said R. Aha, of a king who had a ring and turned the ring over to his son when the son grew up; or the analogy, said R. Isaac, of a king who had treasuries, each with a key, and the king turned over the keys to his son when the son grew up; or the analogy, said R. Hiyya bar Abba, of a

105. The words "*Thou hast redeemed Thy people with Thine arm,*" which appear in Parma MS and P, are deleted as a dittography from above.

106. For an explanation of the omission of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin from the list of kings, see PRKM, p. 101.

107. *Šumyrh* is thus equated with *šemeru*, the Akkadian for the arm ring (worn around the biceps) as a sign of authority and high rank (see Joseph Perles in *Festschrift Adolf Schwarz* [Berlin-Wien, 1917], p. 309). Traditional Jewish commentators define *šumyrh* as a watchtower.

craftsman¹⁰⁸ who had an implement he wrought with and who turned the implement over to his son when the son grew up; or the analogy, said the Rabbis, of a physician who had a medicine cabinet and turned the cabinet over to his son when the son grew up.¹⁰⁹

19. [In keeping with the interpretation that God turned the counting of the months over to Israel], R. Hoshiaia taught: When a court on earth decrees and says, "New Year's Day is today," the Holy One, blessed be He, tells the ministering angels: "Raise up the dais.¹¹⁰ Summon the advocates. Summon¹¹¹ the clerks. For the court on earth has decreed and said: "New Year's Day is today and tomorrow."

But if the witnesses are delayed in coming, or if the court decides to advance the beginning of the year by one day, the Holy One, blessed be He, tells the ministering angels: "Remove the dais, dismiss the advocates, dismiss the clerks, since the court on earth has decreed that the New Year will not begin till tomorrow." And the proof from Scripture? *When it is a decree of Israel, it is an ordinance for the God of Jacob* (Ps. 81:5): therefore what is not a statute for Israel is not—if one be permitted to speak thus—an ordinance for the God of Jacob.

R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiyah taught in the name of R. Simon: When all the ministering angels gather before the Holy One, blessed be He, and say, "Master of universes, when does the

108. "craftsman," as in P.RH 1:3, 57a; PE: "king."

109. The timepiece represents the calendar; the watchtower situated on a height gives the watchman, Israel that is, the capacity to see all things high and low alike; the ring symbolizes the authority given to Israel; in the treasuries rain is stored and the key to its release is given to men such as Hōni the Circle-Drawer (see B.Ta 19a); the implement is the Torah with which God made the world (see Gen. Rabbah 1:1); and the medicine cabinet contains secrets of healing and restoration of life given to men such as Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 4). See *Ḳorban ha-'edah* on P.RH 1:3.

110. A heavenly court to examine all men's deeds comes into session on New Year's Day, and its verdicts are set down on the Day of Atonement, nine days later.

111. The words "the prosecutors," which appear in Parma MS and P, are deleted as a gloss inaccurately translating the word "clerks" which follows.

new year begin?" He replies: "Are you asking Me? Let us, you and I, ask the court on earth."¹¹² And the proof? The verse *The Lord our God is [near] whensoever we on His behalf proclaim*¹¹³ (Deut. 4:7)—proclaim, that is, the set feasts on His behalf. Here the word "proclaim" refers to set feasts, as in the phrase *holy proclamation* (Exod. 12:16). Such feasts, according to R. Kṛispa, citing R. Johanan, were in times gone by proclaimed by God Himself, as shown by the verse *These are the feasts set by the Lord, even holy proclamations* (Lev. 23:4). Now and hereafter they shall be the ones *which YE shall proclaim* (*ibid.*). Hence, according to R. Levi, if you proclaim them, they will be considered *feasts set by the Lord*. But if you do not proclaim them, they will not be considered *feasts set by the Lord*.

20. *This month shall be unto you* (Exod. 12:2). You count the month of Nisan [as the beginning of the year], but the heathen nations do not count it as such.¹¹⁴

R. Levi said in the name of R. Jose son of R. Il'a'i: It is but natural that the large should count by the large, and the small by the small. Esau (Rome) who is large counts by the sun, Jacob who is small counts by the moon which is small, and indeed, as R. Naḥman said, this difference is a happy augury. Just as the larger luminary rules by day but does not rule by night, so wicked Esau rules in this world but will not rule in the world-to-come. And just as the smaller luminary rules by day and by night, so Jacob rules in this world and will also rule in the world-to-come.

R. Naḥman made another observation. R. Naḥman said: As long as the light of the larger luminary shines in the world, the light of the lesser one is not noticeable; but when the light of the larger one declines, the light of the lesser one becomes noticeable. Even so, as long as the light of Esau shines brightly in the world,

112. Cf. MTeh 81:6.

113. JV: *whensoever we call upon Him*.

114. "Sabba Bo 71b quotes from an unknown source the statement that the Jewish calendar was introduced as a protest against the Egyptian one, which was a part of their system of idolatry." Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 432.

the light of Jacob cannot be distinguished, as is said *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee* (Isa. 60:1-2).¹¹⁵

21. R. Simeon ben Yoḥai taught: By three things was Moses baffled: he could not grasp the complicated instructions concerning the making of the candlestick for the Tabernacle; he did not know how to identify the reptiles forbidden as food; he did not understand the mystery of the moon's changes. God indicated each of the three with His finger, so to speak, to Moses, saying of the candlestick, *THIS is the work of the candlestick* (Num. 8:4); of the reptiles, *THIS is what is unclean unto you among the creeping things that creep upon the earth* (Lev. 11:29); and of the moon's changes, *THIS stage of the moon's renewal shall be the time when months begin*.¹¹⁶

[It was necessary for God to indicate the mystery of the moon's changes to Moses because, as] R. Simla'i taught in the name of Samuel, on any day that the conjunction of the new moon does not take place before noon,¹¹⁷ it cannot possibly be seen [in the evening] by any human eye [such as Moses'].

In this connection R. Samuel bar Nahman explained that in the year when Israel went forth out of Egypt, the lunar month as well as the spring season¹¹⁸ began on the same day of the week.¹¹⁹ Thus in the year when Israel went forth out of Egypt, the season of spring began with the coming of darkness on

115. See Gen. Rabbah 6:3.

116. JV: *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months.*

117. Literally "before six hours."

118. The year is divided into four seasons (*tēḥuṣot*): the summer and winter solstices, the vernal and autumnal equinoxes. See MTch 19:10.

119. PR reads "the months of the year and the months of the seasons were equal," which seems to say that the lunar months as well as each of the four seasons of the year began on the same day of the week. But Professor Abraham Sachs informs me that such a phenomenon is impossible; and so, at his suggestion, I follow the unadmitted and unasserted emendation of the passage as set down by Edgar Frank in his *Talmudic and Rabbinical Chronology* (New York, 1956), p. 52, n. 81.

Wednesday evening, for the conjunction of the moon and the sun took place on Wednesday at noon. And so both the lunar month and the season of spring began on Wednesday evening.

[Through the following procedure]—so said R. Berechiah and R. Hiyya citing R. Johanan—[God indicated with His finger, so to speak, to Moses how to determine the arrival of the new moon]: The Holy One, blessed be He, wrapped Himself in a prayer shawl with woolen fringes and placed Moses on one side of Him and Aaron on the other. Then He summoned Michael and Gabriel, who as messengers dispatched by the court¹²⁰ were to report their witnessing the arrival of the new moon, and He asked them: "In exactly what position did you see the moon? Turned towards the sun? Away from it? To the north? To the south? How high in the sky was it? Towards what point in the compass did it incline? How thick was the crescent?"

God then said to Moses and Aaron: In just the manner that you have observed here shall My children on earth reckon the calendar throughout the year: the presence of an elder, of witnesses, and of a prayer shawl with woolen fringes¹²¹ are all required.

22. <*This shall be a new experience for you.*> R. Nahman, [and jointly] R. Eliezer ben Jose and R. Aha, commented on this passage. According to one, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, here in Egypt you are to have a new and unprecedented experience in redemption.¹²² And according to the others: Here you are to have a completely new experience which you will have again only in the time-to-come. As in the time-to-come *The eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the*

120. Such messengers were employed by the court and sent out whenever witnesses who sighted the arrival of the new moon failed to come.

121. The fringes were blue, a color which "has the appearance of the sea; the sea, the appearance of grass; grass, the appearance of heaven; heaven, the appearance of a rainbow; a rainbow, the appearance of a cloud on a rainy day; a cloud on a rainy day, the appearance of the throne of glory; and the throne of glory, the appearance of the glory of the Lord." See MTeh 24:12, and 90:18.

122. The words "in the time-to-come" are deleted, as in MC. See Piska 15:17.

ears of the deaf shall be unstopped (Isa. 35:5), [so that all will see and all will hear], so here, too, for Scripture says, *ALL the people . . . said: "All that the Lord hath spoken we will do"* (Exod. 19:8); and *ALL the people saw the thunderings* (Exod. 20:15). As in the time-to-come *Then shall the lame man leap as a hart* (Isa. 35:6), so here, too, for Scripture says, *Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; and they, [even the lame], stood at the nether part of the Mount* (Exod. 19:17). As in the time-to-come *The tongue of the dumb shall sing* (Isa. 35:6), so here, too, for Scripture says, *ALL the people sang out together*, etc. (Exod. 19:8).

23. *Speak unto all the congregation of Israel, saying: In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb* (Exod. 12:3). But is not a lamb fit for an offering only when newly taken out of the fold? Why, then, is it said *In the tenth day?*¹²³ Because from the tenth day on the lambs were tied to the legs of the bedsteads in Israel's households, and when the Egyptians came in and saw them so tied,¹²⁴ their souls fled in shock at the sight.

In this connection, note the comment of R. Hiyya the son of R. Aha of Joppa on the verse *Draw out, and take you lambs according to your families* (Exod. 12:21): Each of you is to draw out—that is, drag out—lambs, which are regarded as divinities by Egypt, and slay them in plain sight, and none offended thereby will dare speak out.¹²⁵

R. Helbo, citing R. Johanan, called attention to the fact that here Scripture says *In the tenth day of this month*, and in reference to the crossing of the Jordan says *The people came up out of the Jordan on the tenth day of the first month* (Josh. 4:19). The

123. To be kept, as the text goes on to say, for four days, since the Passover lamb was to be slaughtered on the fourteenth day of the month.

124. For the Egyptians, lambs were objects of worship. See Piska 17:5.

125. Parma MS, according to Professor E. E. Urbach's interpretation, reads: ". . . and slay them in plain sight. And he who is familiar with the further development of the homily will know how to go on with it." It is thus a copyist's note.

point of the parallel, as R. Hiyya taught in the name of R. Johanan, is that Israel's daring in taking the lambs in Egypt also stood by them at the Jordan, even as Israel's daring in eating the lamb [on the night of the fourteenth of Nisan] was to stand by them in the days of Haman: *They shall eat the flesh in THAT NIGHT* (Exod. 12:8); *On THAT NIGHT, when the king could not sleep* (Esther 6:1).¹²⁶

24. According to R. Berechiah, citing R. Abbahu, Nahum the son of R. Simai discoursing in Tarsus took the verse to read *They shall take unto them a Man* (Exod. 12:3), that is, take the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is said "The Lord is a Man of war" (Exod. 15:3). You take Him unto yourselves with the two lambs offered up daily in the Temple, [even as you took God unto yourselves when you daringly took the lambs in Egypt]. This parallel is intimated by the two verses in each of which lamb is twice specified: *The one lamb thou shalt offer in the morning, and the other lamb thou shalt offer at dusk* (Exod. 29:39); *One lamb in the ancestral House, the other lamb also in the Temple*¹²⁷ (Exod. 12:3).

[Because of the daily offerings of the lambs brought by a community repenting its misdeeds daily], said R. Yudan in the name of R. Simon, no man who lodged in Jerusalem for a full day could stay possessed of his sin. How so? The morning offering made expiation for transgressions done in the night time; and the offering at dusk made expiation for transgressions done in the day time. No matter what, no man who lodged in Jerusalem for a full day could stay in possession of his sin. And the

126. The Targum on Esther identifies that night as the night when the first-born of Egypt were slain, the night, that is, when the children of Israel ate the Passover lamb. Cf. Esther 3:12.

127. In JV Exod. 12:3 reads *They shall take to them every man a lamb according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household*. The comment may also be directed against the Christian doctrine of the Son of God as the Paschal lamb. No, says this comment, it is the continual sacrifice symbolized by the daily offering by means of which one acquires God.

proof from Scripture? *Righteousness lodged in her* (Isa. 1:21)—that is, “He who lodged in her was made righteous.”¹²⁸

25. <There must be a cleansing—otherwise you will be afflicted by “the head”; there must be many cleansings—otherwise you will be afflicted by “the first” (Exod. 12:2).>¹²⁹ R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Isaac: *There must be a cleansing*—that is, you are to make your deeds clean of evil, otherwise he who is identified as “the head” and he who is identified as “the first” are sure to come. “The head” is wicked Nebuchadnezzar, who is addressed in Scripture, “thou art the head of gold” (Dan. 2:38); “the first” is wicked Esau, of whom it is written “And the first came forth” (Gen. 25:25). Who, O Israel, will ultimately have to requite “the first”¹³⁰ on your behalf? “I the Lord, [shall requite] ‘the first’ [of the Esaus who will afflict you]; and I am He, the same [who will requite] subsequent [Esaus]” (Isa. 41:4). Who will requite Media on your behalf? [I the Lord]. Media is the kingdom alluded to in the expression *by a sum of ten*¹³¹ (Exod. 12:3), which refers to the sum of the talents of silver in Haman’s promise, “And I will pay ten thousands of silver into the hands of those that have charge of the king’s business” (Esther 3:9).

R. Abbahu interpreted the expression *b’ šr, by a sum of ten* (Exod. 12:3), as though it read *b’ ‘šr, the band of ten is sure to come*—that is, Haman and his ten sons. Who will requite them on your behalf? Two mortal guardians,¹³² Mordecai and

128. A slight change in spelling turns *šdk*, “righteousness,” into *šdyk*, “righteous.” The change makes for a better parallel with the concluding clause of the verse, *but now murderers*. See PRKM, pp. 257–59.

129. So the verse must be translated to fit R. Berechiah’s comment which follows. JV: *This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.*

130. So emended in SPR₁ which suggests *mr’šwn* instead of *r’šwn*.

131. JV: *in the tenth*.

132. *Blk̄t̄r* is thus taken to be a form of the Greek *phylaktēr*, “watchman” or “guardian.” See M. Güdemann in FT, p. 204a.

Esther, Mordecai outside the palace, Esther inside.¹³³ Who will requite Greece on your behalf? The descendants of the Hasmonians, who [even in times of affliction and famine] offered up each day the two lambs in the Temple.¹³⁴

Who will settle for you with Edom? Naṭrona,¹³⁵ the Supreme Guardian: *And He shall be unto you a guard*¹³⁶ [against Esau] (Exod. 12:6). Of Esau, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: His father called him great: *Isaac . . . called Esau his great*¹³⁷ son (Gen. 27:1); and his mother called him great: *And Rebekah took the garments of Esau her son, the great one* (Gen. 27:15); nevertheless I call him small: *Behold I make thee small among the nations* (Ob. 1:2). But very well, since Esau is called great, the size of the slaughterer will be in keeping with the size of the ox: *For the Lord hath a sacrifice in Bozrah, and a great slaughter in the land of Edom* (Isa. 34:6), meaning, according to R. Berechiah, that the slaughterer in the land of Edom (Esau) will be the Great One¹³⁸ [—God Himself].

Eat not of it raw (Exod. 12:9). Desire not to see Edom only half-consumed or merely *sodden with water* (*ibid.*); *but roasted with fire; its head with its legs and with the inwards thereof* (*ibid.*)—it, together with its rulers, governors, and commanders, in keeping with the words spoken to Tyre,¹³⁹ *Thy riches, and thy wares . . . with all thy company which is in the midst of thee shall fall into heart of the seas in the day of thy ruin* (Ezek.

133. Friedmann suggests that the words *A lamb, according to their fathers' houses, a lamb for a household* (Exod. 12:3) provide the Scriptural basis for this comment, Mordecai being the lamb of the "fathers' house," and Esther being the lamb within "the household."

134. See B.B. 82b. Friedmann suggests that the Scriptural basis for this comment are the words *Your lamb shall be without blemish* (Exod. 12:5)—a lamb offered up twice daily by priests without blemish.

135. Aramaic for "guardian."

136. JV: *And ye shall keep it.*

137. JV: *elder*. But *gaḏol*, literally, means "large" or "great."

138. R. Berechiah translates the word *ṣēḇāh*, "slaughter," as though it were written *ṣabbah*, "slaughterer." See Piska 14:5.

139. That is, Rome. On the identification of Tyre as Rome see Piska 14:14; Piska 17:8; and Gen. Rabbah 61:7, end.

27:27). According to R. Samuel bar R. Isaac,¹⁴⁰ the conclusion of the verse implies that God said: Even those who were once of My company but went and attached themselves to thy company, they, too, in the day of thy ruin shall fall into the heart of the seas.

And thus ye shall eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste—it is the Lord's Passover (Exod. 12:11). R. Samuel bar Nahman said: Seeing that in this world it was in haste you ate the roasted flesh, lo, what is said of the manner of your deliverance in the world-to-come? *For ye shall not go out in haste, neither shall ye go by flight; for the Lord will go before you, and the God of Israel will be your rearguard* (Isa. 52:12).

140. "R. Samuel bar R. Isaac"—so Parma MS; PE: "Rabbi, who cited R. Isaac."

SUMMARY

Offerings serve
men's needs, not God's

Since God is merciful and man is cruel, if God were hungry, He would not ask cruel man to provide food for Him. In asking for animal sacrifices, He does not make inordinate demands, for it is not to satisfy hunger that He asks for sacrifices. If His angels require no food or drink, God certainly does not require them. If Moses required no food or drink on Sinai, certainly God does not require them. Besides, if no one of God's creations requires to be fed by what it creates, does God the Creator require to be fed by His creation? No. Yet we are told that only a small wine offering is enough to fill, satiate, and even intoxicate Him (Secs. 1-3). How are we to understand such a statement, since man is unable to feed the Behemoth, much less the Behemoth's Creator? The Behemoth feeds on the produce of a thousand mountains, and its need for drink is so huge that the waters of the Jordan are only enough to moisten its mouth. To satisfy its thirst it requires the waters of Yubal, a river that comes forth out of Eden. Similarly, man cannot supply the requirements of Ziz or the Leviathan (Sec. 4). As for the people of Israel, they could not even provide Solomon's measure of food, or the food required by Nehemiah, a governor whose needs were modest. Therefore, when God speaks to them of *food . . . presented unto Me for offerings* (Num. 28:2), it is really the fragrance of their obedience and good deeds which He truly requires and in which He delights (Sec. 5).

Consider: righteous persons like Eliezer, Ruth, and Hezekiah required very little to satisfy their wants. Only the wicked like Esau, Rezin, and Remaliah's son stuffed food into their mouths, the wicked like Mesha, king of Moab, whose desire for more and more sheep knew no restraint. All the wicked who are insatiable receive their just deserts in the end (Sec. 6).

Now that the daily offering to God is no more, the study of the ordinances pertaining to the offering is considered the equivalent of the offering itself. Children, who are pure, are to study Leviticus which has to do with the purity of things, such as the daily offering.

The fact that God asked Israel to bring a burnt offering continually shows that He was pleased with the manner of Israel's presenting it to Him. The daily offerings cause God to put Israel's iniquities out of sight or, according to some, to cleanse them of iniquities of long standing. Several comments follow concerning the place on the altar in Jerusalem where the two lambs are to be offered and the beneficial effects of such offerings—for example, no man who lodged in Jerusalem for a full day could stay possessed of his sin.

The precise character of the daily offering was one of the three commandments which startled Moses who felt that man could not possibly fulfill them, until God reassured him by saying that He did not come to Israel with burdensome demands (Sec. 7).

*Command the children of Israel . . .
My food which is presented unto Me
for offerings made by fire; it is
the fragrance which is My own delight
that ye are to observe to offer unto
Me in its due season (Num. 28:2).¹*

1. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse where God says to man, *If I were hungry, I would not speak to thee of it; for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof* (Ps. 50:12). Of the words *I would not speak to thee of it*, R. Simon said: Thirteen qualities of mercy are attributed in Scripture to the Holy One, blessed be He, as indicated in the verse *And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed: "The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and*

1. JV: *of a sweet savor unto Me, shall ye observe*, etc. In n. 1 Friedmann suggests that Num. 28:1 ff. used to be the lesson in the Torah on a fifth Sabbath (following the four special Sabbaths) which fell in the first week of Nisan.

*abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy unto the thousandth generation, forgiving iniquity, and passing over transgression and sin, clearing [those who repent]"*² (Exod. 34:6-7). Do you think it likely, then, that One so merciful would entrust the providing of His sustenance to man who is cruel? Hence, *If I were hungry, I would not speak to thee of it.*

According to R. Judah the son of R. Simon, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, I have made available as food for you ten clean beasts—three of these subject to your control, and seven not subject to your control. <Subject to your control:> *The ox, the sheep, and the goat* (Deut. 14:4); not subject to your control: *the hart, and the gazelle, and the roebuck, and the wild goat, and the ibex, and the antelope, and the mountain sheep* (Deut. 14:5). Have I so burdened you that you need to go over mountains or hills to fetch Me an offering out of those that are not subject to your control? Have I not told you to fetch only such as are subject to your control, such as those reared at your trough? <Hence, *Suppose I were hungry, I am not asking too much of thee.*>

2. R. Isaac said that Scripture, in stating *My food which is presented unto Me for offerings* (Num. 28:2), raises the question: Does My person require food or drink? If you think My person requires food or drink, then learn otherwise from My angels, learn otherwise from My ministers. Of them it is written *His ministers are a flaming fire*³ (Ps. 104:4). And how is their fire nourished? By the flame-like splendor of God's presence—so stated R. Yudan, citing R. Isaac—for it is written *In the light of the King's countenance is life* (Prov. 16:15). And further on this point R. Haggai, citing R. Isaac, said: It is written *Thou*

2. JV: *forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear.* But in this comment, the latter phrase is rendered literally "clearing [those who repent], but not clearing [those who do not]." See Rashi.

3. Apparently the conclusion of the verse in Num. 28:2, the phrase rendered for the purpose of this comment "take heed of My fiery ones," provides the link with Ps. 104:4. JV: *made by fire.*

art the Lord, even Thou alone; Thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens . . . and Thou preservest them all (Neh. 9:6)—with Thee is the preservation of life. <Hence, if I were hungry I would have no reason to speak to thee.>

R. Simeon ben Lakish said that Scripture, in the verse *It is to be a continual burnt offering, [like that] which was offered on Mount Sinai, for a sweet savor,*⁴ *an offering made by fire unto the Lord* (Num. 28:6), makes rise the question: Does My person require food or drink? If you think My person requires food or drink, learn otherwise from the statement in Scripture, *And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water* (Exod. 34:28). The answer to the question can be arrived at by a *fortiori* argument: If Moses, when he went on a mission for Me, ate no bread and drank no water for forty days and forty nights, do you suppose My person requires food or drink? Hence, *If I were hungry, I would have no reason to speak to thee.*⁵

R. Hiyya bar Abba said in the name of R. Johanan that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: My creatures do not require for their sustenance the things which in accordance with My command they create. Do I, for My sustenance, require the things which I have created? Have you ever in all your life heard anyone say, "Give [some olive oil] to this olive tree to drink so that it will create much more oil?" My creatures do not require for their sustenance the things which in accordance with My command they create. Shall I, then, require for My sustenance that which I have created? Hence, *If I were hungry I would not speak of it to thee [who art My creature].*

4. JV: *It is a continual burnt offering, which was offered in Mount Sinai, for a sweet savor.* But apparently R. Simeon understands the verse to say that the experience of Moses on Mount Sinai proved that the continual daily offering was only to please God whose will was done—a "sweet savor," so to speak. *On Mount Sinai* is taken to refer to the experience of Moses, since no offering was presented on the Mount. It was presented on the altar built "under the Mount" (Exod. 24:4; and Piska 21, n. 25). See David Luria's *Novellae* on Num. Rab. bah 21:16.

5. Cf. [Piska 48.3].

3. R. Yannai said: Human nature being what it is, would a man walking alongside a stream be likely to feel that he has quenched his thirst by drinking no more than two or three *log*⁶ of water? The Lord, however, says of [three] *log* of wine that make up the daily drink offerings: "I drink, I am filled, I am satisfied."⁷ For, as R. Hiyya taught, in the words *In the holy place shalt thou pour out a drink offering of filling, intoxicating drink unto the Lord* (Num. 28:7), His drinking, His filling Himself, His satiety, and His intoxication are implied.

As a matter of fact, said R. Jose ben Menasyah in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish, when the drink offerings are poured upon the altar its cup-like⁸ drains must be stopped up [to make the altar appear overflowing with wine].⁹ According to R. Jose son of R. Abin, if the practice which R. Simeon ben Lakish spoke of is not followed, the drink offering is not valid.

4. [If I were hungry, would I ask sustenance of thee? Why] I gave you just one head of a certain kind of cattle whose measure of food you could not possibly provide! What one is that? The *Behemoth*¹⁰ upon a thousand mountains (Ps. 50:10). On the precise meaning of these words R. Johanan, R. Joshua ben Levi, and the Rabbis differ as follows: According to R. Johanan, the Behemoth is a single head of cattle couched upon a thousand mountains, and the thousand mountains bring forth the food he eats. And the proof? The verse, *Behold now Behemoth which I made*¹¹ . . . Surely the mountains bring him forth food, while all the other beasts of the field can do no more than play there (Job. 40:15, 20). According to¹² R. Joshua ben Levi also, the

6. A *log* is the equivalent of one-fourteenth of a gallon.

7. See [Piska 48.3].

8. [Literally "basin-like." L. N.]

9. See B.Suk 49b.

10. JV: *cattle*.

11. Said to have been created on the sixth day of creation. See Pirke dē-Rabbi 'Eli'ezer, chap. 11.

12. I follow Friedmann in deleting "R. Simeon ben Lakish," which follows in Parma MS and P.

Behemoth is a single head of cattle couched upon a thousand mountains. And the thousand mountains produce all kinds of food for him, food which in the time-to-come will be eaten by the righteous. And the proof? The verse *And Sharon which had been a fold for flocks, and the valley of Achor which had been a place for [Behemoth, huge as many] herds, to couch upon, shall be for My people that have sought Me* (Isa. 65:10). And according to the Rabbis, Behemoth is a single head of cattle couched upon a thousand mountains, and the thousand mountains produce a supply of cattle for him which he eats. And the proof? The verse *Behold now Behemoth . . . for him all the beasts of the field are ground up there*¹³ (Job 40:20). But is such a thing possible, that cattle should eat other cattle? R. Tanḥuma, quoting *The works of the Lord are many* (Ps. 111:2), said: How divers are the works of the Holy One, blessed be He!

And what does Behemoth drink? R. Joshua ben Levi said: In a single draught he drinks up all the water that the Jordan brings down in six months. And the proof? The verse *Behold now Behemoth . . . the Jordan rushes forth*¹⁴ *to his mouth* (Job 40:15, 23). And the Rabbis said: He makes a single draught of all [the water] that the Jordan brings down in twelve months. And the proof? The verse *The Jordan rushes forth to his mouth*.¹⁵ And yet it is only enough to moisten the Behemoth's mouth.¹⁶ R. Jose said: "There is not even enough to moisten his mouth."¹⁷ Then where does he drink from? R. Jose thereupon quoted the answer of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai: <From Eden> there goes forth a river whose name is Yubal, named in the

13. In this comment the verb *šḥḥ*, "to play," is read *šḥḥ*, "to be ground"—ground up, that is, as food.

14. Since Scripture says "rushes," it implies, according to R. Joshua, the rainy season when the Jordan is full.

15. According to the Rabbis, since the time is not delimited clearly in the verse, a year's flow of the Jordan may be assumed.

16. Since it says *to his mouth*, and not "to his throat."

17. Since Scripture says *to his mouth*, it seems to imply that the waters of the Jordan do not even wet its mouth.

verse *That spreadeth out its roots by Yubal*¹⁸ (Jer. 17:8), and from there he drinks.

It was taught in the name of R. Meir: *But ask now the Behemoth—the Behemoth of a thousand hills—and he*¹⁹ *shall teach thee* (Job 12:7) [that if I were hungry I would not ask sustenance of thee]; *and the fowl of the air—that is, the Ziz, [a bird so huge that it darkens the sun with its wings]—and it shall tell thee* (*ibid.*); *or speak to the earth—the part that is the Garden of Eden*²⁰—*and it shall teach thee* (Job 12:8); *and the fish*²¹ *of the sea—that is, the Leviathan—shall declare unto thee* (*ibid.*). *Who knoweth not among all these, that the hand of the Lord hath wrought this?* (Job 12:9). <Hence, *If I were hungry, I would not ask sustenance of thee.*>

5. I gave you a unique king, and no creature could provide his measure of food. What king was that?²² Solomon, son of David. *And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal* (I Kings 5:2). According to R. Samuel bar Isaac, these measures were only enough to provide him with honey cakes to nibble. As for his regular meals, no creature was capable of providing enough food for them. *Ten fat oxen* (I Kings 5:3)—fattened with fodder; *and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and a hundred sheep* (*ibid.*)—also out of the pastures; *besides harts, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fatted barburim*²³ (*ibid.*). These *barburim*, according to R. Berechiah, citing R. Judah, were various kinds

18. JV: *the river*. That this was in Eden is inferred from the fact that the text speaks of the abode of the righteous and of the tree of life. See Rashi on B.Bek. 55b.

19. JV: *the beasts, and they*.

20. Since Behemoth, Ziz, and Leviathan, marvelous creatures, are referred to in the other parts of the verse, the commentator assumes that the marvelous part of the earth, namely, the Garden of Eden, is referred to in this part of the verse.

21. JV: *fishes*. But apparently he construes the plural as intimating the gigantic size of this particular fish. Cf. Piska 23:5, n. 25.

22. "What king was that?"—Parma MS.

23. Usually rendered *fowls*.

of game from the vivarium.²⁴ But according to the Rabbis, *barburim* was the name of a large bird, renowned and choice, which was brought every day and served at Solomon's table.²⁵ R. Judah bar Zabda said: Solomon had a thousand wives,²⁶ and each of them used to prepare a banquet, such as the one described just above, thinking that he might choose to dine with her. Hence, *If I were hungry, I would not ask sustenance of thee.*

I gave you a unique person, the one who was once held captive.²⁷ His measure of food you could not provide. What person was that? Nehemiah the governor, who said: *Now that which was prepared for one day was one ox and six choice sheep, also fowls were prepared for me; and once in ten days store of all sorts of wine; yet for all this I demanded not the usual fare provided for the governor, because the service was heavy upon this people* (Neh. 5:18). What is meant by *fare . . . for the governor*? R. Huna bar Yoḳo said: It means, "food elegantly prepared in tripod vessels." <Hence, [because you could not provide even enough for the governor], *If I were hungry, I would not ask sustenance of thee.*>

[It is not the offering itself upon the fire which delights Me]; *it is the fragrance which is a delight unto Me* (Num. 28:2). "When fragrant spices sprinkled on coals are brought in after the banquet is over" (Ber 6:6), do the guests enjoy anything more of the spices except the fragrance? <So the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, of all the offerings which you bring before Me, do I enjoy aught of them other

24. *Barburim* is thus taken to be the Hebrew adaptation of the Latin "vivarium."

25. A parallel passage in Eccles. Rabbah 2:7 goes on to say that the bird came from *Barbaria*—a term applied to countries beyond the Roman Empire.

26. For the number see 1 Kings 11:3.

27. *Šḇwy*, "held captive"—Parma MS and parallel in PRKB, 58b, and PRKM, p. 114; PE read *'pwy*, which makes no sense. Nehemiah is described as having been held captive either because he lived part of his life in exile in Babylon, or because he had been enslaved by Artaxerxes. [*Šḇwy* also seems to fit ill with what appears to be a sliding scale: Israel cannot feed God; indeed, they cannot feed a king; as a matter of fact, they cannot feed even a lowly governor. Hence some word for governor or prefect may have stood originally in the text and become hopelessly corrupted. L.N.]

than the fragrance? As is said, *It is the fragrance which is My own delight that ye are to . . . offer unto Me* (Num. 28:2)²⁸ [by your obedience²⁹ and good deeds].>³⁰

6. *It is the fragrance which is My own delight that ye are to observe to offer unto Me* (Num. 28:2). Consider the verse *The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his desire; but the belly of the wicked shall want* (Prov. 13:25). *The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his desire.* Such was Eliezer the servant of Abraham who said to our mother Rebekah: "Give me to drink, I pray thee, a little water of thy pitcher" (Gen. 24:17)—one drink satisfied him. *But the belly of the wicked shall want.* Such was the wicked Esau who said to our father Jacob: "Stuff me, I pray thee, with this red, red pottage" (Gen. 25:30). R. Isaac bar Eliezer explained: This wicked man opened wide his mouth as though he were a camel and said: "I have my mouth open, keep putting food into it." The word "stuff me"³¹ is associated with the feeding of a camel, as we read in the Mishnah: "On the Sabbath you must not make a manger of the camel's stomach, nor push food into his gullet, but you may stuff it into his mouth" (Shab 24:3).

Another comment: *The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his desire* (Prov. 13:25). Such was Ruth the woman of Moab, of whom it is written "And she did eat and was satisfied, and left thereof"³² (Ruth 2:14). R. Isaac said: From this verse you

28. JV: *of an odor of delight unto Me shall ye observe to offer unto Me.* In the Rabbinic paraphrase the entire verse seems to be read as follows: *As for My offering, My food, consider My fiery angels. [Since they require no food, would I?] It is the fragrance which is My own delight that ye are to observe to offer unto Me.*

29. With reference to the phrase "the fragrance which is My own delight," Rashi on B.Zeb 46a says that it means "It is pleasing to Me that I spoke and My will was done." See also B.Men 110a and MhG Num. p. 179.

30. The parallel in Num. Rabbah 21:19 reads: "My children! It is not because I eat or drink that I told you to offer sacrifices, but on account of the savor which should remind you that you must be sweet and pleasing to Me like a sweet savor." See also [Piska 48:3].

31. A *hapax legomenon* in Scripture.

32. Since all she ate was parched corn held out to her between the tips of the fingers, R. Isaac is led to make the inference which follows. See Lev. Rabbah 34:8.

may infer one of two possible meanings: Blessing dwelt in the hand of the righteous Boaz who gave her corn to eat; or blessing dwelt in the stomach of the righteous Ruth who required so little. But since the verse says, "And she did eat and was satisfied, and left thereof," it is more probable that the blessing dwelt in the stomach of this righteous woman. *But the belly of the wicked shall want.* These are [heathen of] the nations of the earth. R. Meir said: I asked a certain R. Dosetai of Kokaba:³³ What is meant by *The belly of the wicked shall want*? He replied: In our city there was a heathen who prepared a banquet for all the elders of the city, and he invited me along with them. He meant to set before us all that the Holy One, blessed be He, created during the six days of creation, and indeed his table lacked nothing at all except soft-shelled nuts.³⁴ [When the heathen saw that they were wanting], what did he do? He took away from before us the table top from which we had eaten—it was worth something like six talents of gold—and broke it. I asked him: Why did you do this? He replied: "Rabbi, you say this world is ours and the world-to-come is yours. So if we cannot eat all that we want to now, when shall we eat?" To him I applied the verse *The belly of the wicked shall want.*

Another comment: *The righteous eateth to the satisfying of his desire.* Such was Hezekiah king of Judah. Only two bunches of greens and one pound of meat were brought in and set before him every day. And Israel spoke disrespectfully of him, saying: This one calls himself a king, but Rezin—and the son of Remaliah also—is really a king: "And they rejoiced over Rezin and Remaliah's son" (Isa. 8:6).³⁵ Indeed, said they, kingship befits Rezin. Of this contrast in kingly behavior it is written *Forasmuch as this people hath refused the waters of Shiloah that go to 'At*,³⁶ and rejoiceth with Rezin and Remaliah's son (Isa. 8:6).

33. Near Jotapata in Galilee.

34. See Piska 11.2, n. 14.

35. The dessert served before Pekah, Remaliah's son, king of Samaria, to speak of nothing else, consisted of 40 *sē'ah* of young pigeons. See Rashi, and B.Sanh 94b.

36. JV: *that go softly*; Hebrew *lē-'at* (spelled *l'et*).

How can it be said that the waters of Shiloah went to "'At," since Bar Kappara stated: We went through Scripture again and again but found no place named "'At?" Hence, in its connection with Hezekiah king of Judah, the word must be explained in a different way. It was he who instituted for women the practice of immersion after their menstrual periods³⁷ in a pool of forty *se'ah*,³⁸ and forty corresponds to the word *le-'at*, for this number is the sum of the numerical value of the letters that compose the word.³⁹ By instituting immersion for women Hezekiah brought sexual purity and restraint to the people of Israel. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, said apropos of Israel's rejoicing at Rezin's and Remaliah's son's lack of restraint: Is it the greatly voracious that you are out to praise? *Now, therefore, behold, I the Lord bring up upon you*⁴⁰ *the waters of the River, mighty and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory; and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks [and will devour you] (Isa. 8:7).*

But the belly of the wicked shall want (Prov. 13:25). Such was Mesha king of Moab, as is said *Now Mesha king of Moab was a noqed*⁴¹ (2 Kings 3:4). What is meant by *noqed*? A sheep raiser, one whose desire for more and more sheep knew no restraint.⁴² *And he was finally forced to render unto the king of Israel a hundred thousand fattened lambs and a hundred thousand wool bearing rams (ibid.)*—[not "the wool of a hundred thousand rams," as the verse might be read], R. Abba bar Kahana explained, but rams full-grown and unshorn.⁴³

37. Isa. 8:6 is thus read: *The waters of Shiloah which [Hezekiah caused to] go to pools of cleansing.*

38. A *se'ah* is the equivalent of 2.83 of a gallon. Forty *se'ah* is the minimum required for such a pool.

39. $l = 30$, $' = 1$, $t = 9$.

40. MT: *behold, the Lord bringeth up upon them.*

41. Professor Saul Lieberman called my attention to the fact that since in the Septuagint the word *noqed* was left untranslated, there must have been some uncertainty about its precise meaning.

42. I am indebted to Professor E. E. Urbach for suggesting that the term *r'y* in Parma MS be translated "evil eye which knows no restraint." I take the word to have a dual meaning, the one just given as well as "sheep raiser."

43. Professor Baruch Levine helped me to understand the point of R. Abba

In another comment the verse is read *The Righteous eateth one's fill of that which is in a man's soul*.⁴⁴ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, of all offerings which you present to Me I delight only in those with the fragrance [of obedience and good deeds], as is said *It is the fragrance which is My own delight* (Num. 28:2).

7. *Shall ye [continually] observe to offer unto Me in its due season* (Num. 28:2). As the Psalmist indicates in the verse *In Thy Numbers Thou didst [again] ordain to observe due season*⁴⁵ (Ps. 119:4). [The verse from Numbers is the second time that Scripture ordains that burnt offerings be brought daily into the Temple]. Is not the indication of the Psalmist's meaning to be found in the words *In Thy Numbers* which refer to the Book of Numbers, and in the words *due season* which echo *due season* [in Num. 28:2]? Since the Section in Exodus (29:38-42) setting forth the ordinance is exactly like the Section in Numbers setting it forth, why does Scripture set it forth once and then again [at the time Israel was about to enter the land of Canaan]? R. Judah, R. Nehemiah, and the Rabbis differed in their answers. According to R. Judah it was because Israel said: In the past, [during our wanderings in the wilderness], when camp had to be moved from place to place, the continual burnt offering could rightly be required at each new site. But now [that we are about to enter the land of Canaan], even as the moving of camp from place to place is about to cease, so should

bar Kahana's comment. He also called my attention to the reference in Gesenius' *Hebrew Grammar* (2d ed., Oxford 1910, reprinted 1960), pp. 423-24, where an explanation for the anomalous form *'elim semer* can be found.

44. The Hebrew word *nfs* may mean either "desire" or "soul."

45. By means of a play on *pikkudim*, "precepts," which can also mean "Numbers," and on *mē'od*, "diligently," which may be read *mo'ed*, "season," the commentator apparently suggests the following translation of Ps. 119:3-4: *Though they do no unrighteousness, [though] they walk in His ways, yet in Thy Numbers Thou didst ordain [that which is to be offered daily in its] due season—the daily round of offerings brought in a spirit of adoration. IV: Thou hast ordained Thy precepts (pikkudeka) that we should observe them diligently (mē'od).*

the continual burnt offering cease.⁴⁶ Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Go tell Israel to go on with the continual burnt offering.

According to R. Nehemiah, [as they were about to enter the Land of Israel], the children of Israel took to ridiculing the continual burnt offering, saying, "Since the Land itself makes expiation for our sins,"⁴⁷ there will be no further need for burnt offerings."⁴⁸ Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Go tell Israel not to ridicule the continual burnt offering.⁴⁹

According to the Rabbis, the preceding passage in Exodus enjoined study;⁵⁰ this passage enjoins performance.

According to R. Aḥa, in the name of R. Ḥanina bar Papa, the ordinance was repeated because Israel said: In the past, [before the Temple was destroyed], we used to bring offerings and so we concerned ourselves with study of the pertinent ordinances; but now, since we do not bring offerings, why concern ourselves with such study? The Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: When you concern yourselves with such study, it is as though you bring offerings.

R. Huna said: The exiles will be gathered in only through the merit of studying the entire body of Mishnah.⁵¹ And the proof? The verse *Yea, if among the nations they engage in oral learning*,⁵² *I will forthwith gather them up* (Hos. 8:10).

46. Continuing adoration of God was unnecessary. A one-time offering in the Temple in Jerusalem should be sufficient for the God of the permanent site. See *Zayit ra'anān* on Yalkuṭ, *Pinḥas*, 776-77.

47. Cf. *Piska* 1.6.

48. The words "saying, Since the Land itself . . . no further need for burnt offerings" are interpolated on the basis of the comment in *Zayit ra'anān* on Yalkuṭ, *Pinḥas*, 776-77.

49. For regardless of the Land's sanctity, the continuing adoration of God symbolized by the burnt offering brought daily is required. On *mglym* in the sense of "ridicule," see H. Yalon in *Tarbis*, 6 (1935), 228.

50. There is a theory that no offerings were brought in the wilderness. See Ibn Ezra on Num. 28:6; and Sif Num. 67.

51. Those parts which have practical use as well as those which have not. See David Luria on Lev. Rabbah 7:3.

52. In Biblical Hebrew and often in Rabbinic Hebrew the word *ytnw* from *tnh* (which according to EV here means "hire") sometimes means "recount," "rehearse," "learn," or "teach by word of mouth." See Judg. 5:11 and Ps. 8:2 (cf. B.BB 8a).

R. Huna also said another thing: *For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name is great among the nations; and in every place offerings are presented unto My name, even pure oblations* (Mal. 1:11). But was there an oblation to God in Babylonia? ⁵³ What the Holy One, blessed be He, meant was: Since you are engaged in the study of the pertinent ordinances, it is as though you bring oblations.

But Samuel cited the verse *And if they be ashamed of all that they have done, make known unto them the form of the House . . . and write it in their sight; that they may keep the whole form thereof . . . This is the law of the House* (Ezek. 43:11-12). But was there at that time a form of the House of God? The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Since you concern yourselves with its form, it is as though you are building it.

R. Jose said: Why do we start young children with study of the Book of Leviticus? ⁵⁴ It should not be so. We should start them with Genesis. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: As sacrifices are pure, so young children are pure; let the pure come and engage in the study of things that are pure. ⁵⁵

R. Abba bar Kahana and R. Abun, both of them, said in the name of R. Azariah of Kefar Hittaya: ⁵⁶ Consider the analogy of a king who had two cooks. The first cooked a dish for him, and he ate it and it pleased him. The second cooked one for him, and he ate it and it pleased him. But we do not know directly which pleased him more. We may infer, however, that since the king said to the second cook, "Prepare the same dish for me," the dish of the second pleased him more. Even so Noah brought offerings and the Holy One, blessed be He, was pleased, as is said *And the Lord smelled the sweet savor* (Gen. 8:21). Israel brought an offering and it also pleased the Holy One,

53. Sacrifices were offered only in the Land of Israel. What then could the prophet have meant by the statement that during the exile in Babylonia such offerings were presented to God?

54. Literally "the Torah of priests."

55. Unlike Genesis which speaks of the guile of the serpent, of Cain's slaying of Abel, and of Lamech's two wives, the Book of Leviticus reads: *If anyone sin, and commit a trespass*, etc. (Lev. 5:30). See Meir Friedmann in *Beṭ Talmud*, 1, 265.

56. Hattin, near Tiberias.

blessed be He, but we do not know directly which offering pleased Him more. Since He enjoined Israel, however, and said to them: *My food . . . of a sweet savor unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in its due season* (Num. 28:2), we know that Israel's offering pleased Him more.

R. Abin said: Consider the analogy of a king reclining upon his dining couch. They brought him the first dish, he ate it, and it pleased him; <and also the second, which he ate, for it pleased him;> and he licked it clean as a man wipes a dish clean, as is intimated in the verse *I offer unto Thee burnt offerings whose very remnants will be licked up* (Ps. 66:15).⁵⁷

R. Abin said another thing: Compare Him with a king who was journeying along the highway. He came to the first rest station, and he ate; to the second station, where he ate and drank and spent the night. Why does the Torah make repeated reference to the burnt offering, saying, *This is the law of the burnt offering, it is the burnt offering on its burning place upon the altar all night unto the morning* (Lev. 6:2)? By such lingering repetition the Torah teaches that the burnt offering is to be given over wholly to the flames [which will take from night to morning to consume it].⁵⁸

The disciples of Shammai read *ḳēḇašim*, "he-lambs" (Num. 28:3), as though written *ḳabbašim*, "they that put out of sight."⁵⁹ That is, the daily offering of the lambs brings it about that Israel's iniquities are put out of sight by God, as the verse tells us, *He will turn again and have compassion upon us; He will put our iniquities out of sight* (*yikboš*) (Micah 7:19). But the disciples of Hillel said: Whatever is put out of sight, must come into sight again. Accordingly the phrase *ḳēḇašim bēne šanah*, "he-lambs of the first year," is to be understood as though written *ḳabbašim bēne šanah*, "they that cleanse the things which are of many a year." That is, they cleanse the sins of Israel, as

57. "as is intimated in the verse . . . *licked up*"—Parma MS.

58. God is thus understood as spending the entire night with the children of Israel. Cf. Piska 5.3.

59. Since the passage in Numbers is a repetition of what had already been set down in Exodus, it is considered "available" for allegorical interpretation.

is said *Though your sins be as of many a year*⁶⁰ *they shall be as white as snow* (Isa. 1:18). And Ben Azzai said: The phrase *ḳḗḇašim bēne šanah* means that they cleanse the sins of the people of Israel and make them as innocent as an infant in its first year.

The phrase *two with the day* [in the verse *He-lambs . . . two with the day for a continual burnt offering* (Num. 28:3) signifies that the two he-lambs are to be offered respectively on the northeast and southwest corners of the altar] in keeping with the sun's course during the day.⁶¹

In another comment the phrase *two with the day* is read *two for the day* and signifies that [the two he-lambs of the burnt offering acknowledge God's sovereignty] which permits Israel their two meals a day.⁶²

Two for the day: Each lamb will serve as an advocate for Israel on the day, [the Day of Judgment that burneth as a furnace]: *And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, on the day that I do this, even Mine own treasure; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him* (Mal. 3:17).

Two for the day: The two he-lambs are to be offered in behalf of the children of Israel [from day to day] and only two for any particular day.⁶³

Two for the day: It is to be determined in advance⁶⁴ which

60. EV: *scarlet*. But *šanim* can also mean "years." See B. Shab. 89b.

61. For *gll* in the sense of "course" see Job 20:7, and Ibn Janah, *Sefer ha-šforašim* (Berlin 1893), p. 92; "day" can have the meaning of "sun." See Sanh. 10:3. For interpolated words see Sif. Num. 142.

62. "two for the day . . . two meals a day"—Parma MS. Two meals a day were customary in Rabbinic times. I am indebted to Professor E. E. Urbach for the elucidation of this passage. See his Hebrew article on "Ascetic Practice . . . in the Teaching of the Rabbis," in the *I. F. Baer Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1960).

63. So that if the burnt offerings have been omitted on any day the omission cannot be made up on a subsequent day.

64. There were never to be less than six lambs approved for the offering in the Chamber of Lambs of the Sanctuary, and they were to be available four days before being offered (Maimonides' Code, VIII, vi, i, 9 [YJS, 12, 253-54]). The four days were prescribed by analogy with the Paschal lamb (Sif. Num. 142).

lamb is to be slaughtered in the morning and which is to be slaughtered in the evening.

*The burnt offering is for continuing [intercession]*⁶⁵ (Num. 28:6). R. Judah said in the name of R. Simon: No man who lodged in Jerusalem for a full day could stay possessed of his sin. How so? The morning offering made expiation for transgressions done in the nighttime; and the offering at dusk made expiation for transgressions done in the daytime. No matter what, no man who lodged in Jerusalem for a full day could stay possessed of his sin. And the proof from Scripture? *Righteousness lodged in her* (Isa. 1:21).⁶⁶

R. Judah bar Simon said in the name of R. Johanan: From the Divine Power, Moses heard three commandments which startled him and took him aback. First, when He said: *And let them make Me the Sanctuary, and I shall dwell among them* (Exod. 25:8), Moses asked the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of universes, behold, not even the heavens can contain Thee, and yet Thou sayest: *Let them make Me the Sanctuary!*⁶⁷ Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, reassured Moses: Moses, it is not as thou thinkest; though the Sanctuary is to be only twenty boards in the north and twenty boards in the south and eight in the west, yet I shall go down to the earth below and shrink My presence into their midst, as is said *And there I will meet with thee* (Exod. 25:22).

Second, when the children of Israel sinned, [and God commanded]: *They shall give every man a ransom for his soul* (Exod. 30:12), Moses asked: Master of universes, who can give a ransom for his soul? *No man can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him—for too costly is the redemption of their soul, and must be let alone for ever,*

65. A sin offering is intercessory, whereas a burnt offering is a gift—a purely devotional act. Still, when the burnt offering alone is presented it also has intercessory power. See Ginzberg, *CPT*, 3, 42.

66. See Piska 15.24, where the commentator reads the verse "He who lodged in her was made righteous."

67. "and I shall dwell among them . . . Thou sayest: *Let them make Me the Sanctuary!*"—Parma MS.

etc. (Ps. 49:8-9). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: It is not as thou thinkest! But *This they shall give*⁶⁸ (Exod. 30:13), as if to say, "They need give only as much as this," and then, according to R. Meir, the Holy One, blessed be He, brought forth from under the throne of glory something like a coin of fire and showed it to Moses and said to him: *This they shall give*—they need give no more than this.

And third, when He said: *My food . . . of a sweet savor unto Me, shall ye observe to offer unto Me in its due season* (Num. 28:2), Moses asked the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of universes, if I were to bring all the beasts of the earth, would they be sufficient for a single offering? Or all the trees of the world—would they be sufficient for one altar fire? For it is written *And Lebanon is not sufficient for altar fire, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for burnt offerings* (Isa. 40:16). The Holy One, blessed be He, reassured Moses: It is not as thou thinkest. But *he-lambs of the first year without blemish, two day by day* (Num. 28:3). Not even two at a time; but one *in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at dusk* (Num. 28:4).

(R. Huna said in the name of Rab: The verse *Almighty, we have not found Thee out*,⁶⁹ *O Great One in strength* [Job 37:23] means that we cannot find out the full strength of the might of the Holy One, blessed be He, for the Holy One, blessed be He, does not come to Israel with burdensome demands).⁷⁰

And when Moses heard this he began congratulating Israel, saying: *Happy is the people that is in such a case, yea, happy is the people whose God is the Lord* (Ps. 144:15).

68. Half a shekel. Cf. Piska 10.12, 15.

69. MT: *whom we cannot find out*.

70. That is, God makes requests not according to the greatness of His own strength, but according to the strength of the giver.

SUMMARY

God's justice on the
Passover midnight

Since only the Lord can know the precise instant of midnight, since only He can distinguish between the seed of a first birth and the seed which is not of a first birth, Scripture says that *At midnight the Lord smote all the first-born* (Exod. 12:29) (Sec. 1). Because Moses predicted that at midnight God would go out into the midst of Egypt, God, whose wont it is to confirm the word of His servants, acted precisely at midnight (Sec. 2).

It was at midnight, therefore, that David would rise to occupy himself with Torah and to thank God for the judgments brought at Passover's midnight upon the Pharaoh who seized Sarah. David would also thank God for His judgments upon the Moabites and the Ammonites; thank Him for His mercies in Egypt to Israel's forbears; and finally thank Him for Boaz' restraining his desire for Ruth, since if he had not restrained himself, the seed of David might have been accursed (Sec. 3).

It was on a Passover midnight also that Abraham pursued the four kings who had invaded the land of Canaan, and defeated them. Indeed, God went forth at midnight to war in behalf of Israel in Egypt as a reward to Abraham for his boldness in going to war on the same midnight many years before. Contradictory passages seeming to indicate that during the day the princely counterpart of Egypt in heaven was felled and the first-born of Egypt died are reconciled (Sec. 4).

The term "first-born" is interpreted as having applied to children first-born to males as well as to the first-born of females. The term is also taken to have applied to heads of households and to the first-born of maidservants. The term applied even to statues of first-born who had died, and so the statues were smashed. It applied even to the first-born of cattle, worshiped by the Egyptians, and so the cattle died.

Sensing the imminence of disaster, the first-born of the Egyptians pleaded with their fathers and with Pharaoh to let the Hebrews go. At the denial of their plea, the first-born turned upon their fathers and slew sixty myriads of them. The only first-born who did not die was Pharaoh's daughter Bithiah (Sec. 5).

In His exercise of justice God is reluctant to take human life, as is seen from the way He proceeded against Job and against Mahlon and Chilion, and as is seen also from the plagues which He first brings upon the property of Israelites before inflicting them upon the Israelites themselves. In Egypt also, God first took toll of the Egyptians' goods and property and only afterwards smote their first-born (Sec. 6).

The plagues in Egypt followed military tactics: water conduits were shut off, arrows shot, legions mustered, sources of food cut off, burning stuff flung, catapults set up, scalers of walls mobilized, imprisonment and executions ordered (Sec. 7). The punishments visited upon Egypt will in the time-to-come be visited upon Edom (Rome) (Sec. 8).

*And it came to pass at midnight, that
the Lord smote all the first-born in the
land of Egypt (Exod. 12:29).¹*

1. R. Tanḥum of Jaffa, in the name of R. Mana² of Caesarea, began his discourse by citing the verse *When I pondered how I might apprehend this, it proved too difficult for me* (Ps. 73: 16). By these words David meant that no creature could be so knowing as to apprehend the instant of midnight—only the Holy One, blessed be He, could. For the likes of me, said David, it is too difficult. And so because no creature can be so knowing as to apprehend the instant of midnight—only the Holy One, blessed be He, can—therefore Scripture says, *And it came to pass at midnight, that the LORD smote.*

R. Aḥa began his discourse by citing the verse *I am the*

1. Exod. 12:21–51 is the lesson in Scripture on the first day of Passover.

2. So apparently Parma MS; P: "R. Ṭanya."

*Lord, that is My name; and My glory will I not give to a delayed one,*³ *neither My renown to things hewn out* (Isa. 42:8). *I am the Lord, that is My name* means, according to R. Aḥa, that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I am the Lord, that is My name, the name which Adam called Me; that is My name, the name I have consented to be called by; that is My name I have consented to be called by when I am with the ministering angels. *And My glory will I not give to a delayed one* means, according to R. Naḥman citing R. Abun, not give [any kind of independent power] to the demons [whose creation was delayed to the end of the sixth day of creation].⁴

R. Menaheman, citing R. Mana, said: No creature in the world is able to distinguish between the seed of a first birth and the seed which is not that of a first birth—only the Holy One, blessed be He, can so distinguish. As for me, said Moses, it was too difficult for me. Therefore *And it came to pass at mid-night, that the LORD smote all the first-born.*

2. It is written *That confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers, each of whom says of Jerusalem: "She shall be inhabited"; and of the cities of Judah: "They shall be built, and I will raise up the waste places thereof"* (Isa. 44:26). R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi: Since we know of one instance in which God confirmed the word of one of His servants, is it not certain that He will perform⁵ *the counsel of His [many] messengers, each of whom says of Jerusalem: "She shall be inhabited"; and of the cities of Judah: "They shall be rebuilt"*? Consider the instance when an angelic servant of God appeared to Jacob our father and said to him: *Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel* (Gen. 32:29). Then the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared and confirmed the decree of the angelic servant and said to Jacob:

3. EV: *another*; but in this comment the word 'hr is apparently rendered in the sense of "delay."

4. See *Aḥ* 5:6. For the preternatural power of demons, see MTeh 78:12.

5. R. Berechiah thus reads the verse in Isaiah as follows: *He that confirmeth the word of His servant will surely perform, etc.*

Thy name shall not be called anymore Jacob, but Israel shall be thy name (Gen. 35:10). All the more certain is it that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, for all prophetic messengers predict that it will be rebuilt.

Some say that by *confirmeth the word of His servant*, the word of Moses, [he whom God called] "My servant Moses" (Num. 12:7), is meant; and by *performeth the counsel of His messengers*, again Moses, [of whom it is said that the Lord] "sent a messenger and brought us forth out of Egypt" (Num. 20:16). Thus the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Go tell them, tell Israel, *I will go through the land of Egypt in that night* (Exod. 12:12). But Moses went and specified a time, saying to Israel: *Thus saith the Lord: At the time of⁶ midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt* (Exod. 11:4). Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Long since have I assured Moses and said of him: *He is trusted in all My house* (Num. 12:7). Shall My servant Moses be made out to be a liar? Since Moses said *At the time of midnight*, I will act *at midnight*.⁷

3. *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy judgments, of Thy mercy⁸* (Ps. 119:62). R. Phinehas said in the name of R. Eliezer the son of R. Menahem: What did David use to do? He would take a psaltery and a harp, put them at the head of his couch, and rising at midnight would play upon them. Thereupon the studious in Israel, hearing the sound of David's playing, used to say: "If David, king of Israel, occupies himself [at midnight] with Torah, so much the more should we." And so it turned out that all in Israel occupied themselves with Torah.

R. Levi said: A window to the north side was left open above

6. So Rashi; EV: *about*.

7. Cf. Piska 3.1.

8. Since the word *mšpṭ* means "judgment" and the word *śdk* "mercy," the commentator finds the two notions together inconsistent, and the phrase an oxymoron; and so instead of rendering it "Thy judgments of mercy" he divides the phrase into its constituents, and renders it "Thy judgments, Thy mercy." JV: *Thy righteous ordinances*.

David's couch, and over against the window was hung the harp. When the north wind came up at midnight it blew through the strings, and the harp then played of itself. Hence the text *when [the instrument] played* (2 Kings 3:15). Note the text does not say "when the minstrel played," but *when the instrument played*, meaning that the harp played of itself. And all in Israel heard it.

It was of this rising at midnight that David sang: *Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I will awake the dawn* (Ps. 57:9), as if to say: Let my glory—the glory of a king—awake for the sake of my Maker's glory, for my glory is nothing at all before my Maker's glory. *I will awake the dawn*: that is, "I will awake the dawn, the dawn shall not awake me." For his Inclination to evil, inciting David, would say to him: "David! It is the way of kings that the dawn awake them. Yet thou declar-est *I will awake the dawn*. It is the way of kings to sleep three hours into the day.⁹ Yet thou sayest *At midnight I will rise*." And what would David reply? I rise *because of the judgments, because of Thy mercy*. What did David mean by *because of the judgments, because of Thy mercy*? He meant: Because of the judgments Thou didst bring upon Pharaoh, and because of the mercy Thou didst show to my grandmother Sarah, as is said *And the Lord plagued the house of Pharaoh*¹⁰ *with great plagues because of Sarai, Abram's wife* (Gen. 12:17).¹¹

Or, by *because of the judgments, because of Thy mercy*, David meant: Because of Thy judgments which Thou didst bring upon certain nations of the earth, [such as the Ammonites and the Moabites];¹² and because of the mercy which Thou

9. Till nine o'clock in the morning. See Ber 1:2.

10. MT: *Pharaoh and his house*.

11. See Piska 15:23. "The view that many important events in the history of the Patriarchs and that of Israel took place during the first night of Passover is very old and is a favorite topic with Paitanim." See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 221, n. 76.

12. Ruth Rabbah 6:1 reads "judgments which Thou didst bring upon the Ammonites and the Moabites," who could not be admitted into the community of the Lord (Deut. 23:4). Here there may be an allusion to the incestuous origin of the Ammonites and Moabites. The two daughters of Lot, thinking

didst show to my grandfather Boaz and to my grandmother Ruth. Had Boaz, [giving in to his sexual desire], permitted himself to slip into her as she lay at his feet, whence would I have had my origin? ¹³ Instead Thou didst put a blessing into his heart, so that, [restraining his sexual desire], he said: *Be blessed by the Lord, my daughter* (Ruth 3:10).¹⁴

Or, by *because of the judgments*, etc., David meant: Because of the judgments which Thou didst bring upon the Egyptians in Egypt, and because of the mercy Thou didst show our fathers in Egypt at a time when they were carrying out no more than two of the divine commands,¹⁵ those concerned with the blood of Passover and the blood of circumcision. Of this it is written *And when I passed by thee, and saw thee wallowing in thy blood, I said unto thee: In thy blood, live; yea, I said unto thee: In thy blood, live* (Ezek. 16:6)—live, that is, through the blood of the Passover lamb and the blood of circumcision.

4. <*And it came to pass in the precise middle of the night*, etc. (Exod. 12:29).> R. Simeon ben Yoḥai taught: Moses did not know the exact duration of an 'eṭ, of a reḡa', or of a zēman ¹⁶

that the world had come to an end, contrived through drink to make their father have intercourse with them (see Gen. 19:31 ff., and Piska 42.3). In a sense Ruth's stratagem was not dissimilar. Boaz had eaten and drunk and took his rest by a pile of sheaves; then Ruth crept near, turned back the end of Boaz' mantle, and lay down (Ruth 3:7). But for God's mercy, as the commentator goes on to say, the outcome for Ruth's progeny might have been as fateful as it was for the progeny of the daughters of Lot.

13. Such an unhallowed union between Boaz, a man of 80, and Ruth, a woman of 40, might have brought no progeny at all, or the seed might have been accursed seed like that of the Ammonites and Moabites.

14. MT: *Blessed be thou of the Lord*.

15. See Piska 15.17. At one time the Hebrews in Egypt worshiped idols, filled the theaters and circuses of the land, and behaved much like the Egyptians. See Tanhuma B, 2, 4; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 379, 395.

16. All these are measures of time, each one twenty-fourth of the one preceding. An 'eṭ is one twenty-fourth part of an 'onah, which is one twenty-fourth part of an hour; a reḡa' is one twenty-fourth of an 'eṭ, a zēman is one twenty-fourth of a reḡa'. See Tos Ber 1:1, ed. Lieberman; *Piske tosafoṭ*, AZ, 1:4; and H. Y. Borenstein, in *hat-Tēḡufah*, 6, 270. In his CPT (1, 59), Ginzberg maintains that the division of the hour into diminishing time units of twenty-fourths is not found among other peoples.

in the night. Therefore he said *about midnight* (Exod. 11:4). But the Holy One, blessed be He, knows the exact duration of an 'et, of a *reḡa'*, or of a *zēman* in the night. Therefore He could come at the very middle of the night with hairbreadth precision.

[Another comment on an event which took place on the same midnight many years before, when *The night was divided for (Abraham and his servants pursuing the marauding kings)* (Gen. 14:15)]. How did the division of the night come about? ¹⁷ R. Benjamin bar Japheth said in the name of R. Johanan: It just happened that way. But the Rabbis said: Its Creator divided it, for in the light of the verse *And it came to pass at the time of God's dividing of the night* (Exod. 12:29), they do not read the verse in Genesis, "the night was divided," etc., but read it, *He divided the night for [Abraham and his servants]*, etc. (Gen. 14:15).¹⁸

According to R. Tanhuma, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Your father Abraham went forth to war at midnight; I, likewise, will go forth with his sons at midnight.¹⁹

And according to the Rabbis, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Your father went forth with Me from nightfall until midnight; and I will go forth with his sons from midnight until dawn.

R. Isaac said: The princely counterpart of Egypt in heaven is felled only during the daytime.²⁰ And the proof? The verse

17. Cf. Lev. Rabbah 6:5 (M, p. 138, and notes thereto). In a comment on *And Moses took half the blood* (Exod. 24:6) a similar question is asked: How did the division of the blood come about? How, that is, could a mortal make such an exact division?

18. In the comment of the Rabbis *wyhlk* is vocalized not *wayyehalek*, "and was divided," but *wayyahālok*, "and He divided."

19. Abraham's fight against the four nations is understood as prefiguring Israel's age-old battle against the four kingdoms, Egypt, Babylon, Greece, and Rome.

20. According to Friedmann's n. 33, this is the first of three comments which endeavor to reconcile the statement that *at midnight . . . the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt* (Exod. 12:29) with the contradictory statement *on the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt* (Num. 3:13). According to Friedmann, R. Isaac construes the expression *on the day that I smote all the first-born* as asserting that the princely counterpart of Egypt in heaven, i.e. the pride of her power, perished in the daytime, even as in the time-to-come he is to perish in the daytime. But according to David Luria, R.

At Tehaphnehes also the day shall withdraw itself, when I shall break there the yokes of Egypt, and the pride of her power shall cease in her, etc. (Ezek. 30:18); and again *In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts; one shall be the city of Heres*²¹ (Isa. 19:18)—a name which signifies either the “city of sherds” or “city of the sun.” [These are the five cities]: No—that is, Alexandria; Noph—that is, Memphis; Tehaphnehes²²—that is, Hupianas; the city of sherds—that is, Ostracena;²³ and the city of the sun—that is, Heliopolis.

R. Johanan ben Zakkai explained away the apparent contradiction, saying: We find in Scripture that the day and the night together are spoken of as a day, as is said *And there was evening and there was morning one day*²⁴ (Gen. 1:5).

R. Joshua bar Nehemiah resolved the apparent contradiction on the basis of the following verse: *Even the darkness is not too dark for Thee; the night shineth as the day; the darkness is even as the light* (Ps. 139:12). The verse intimates that God is saying: The darkness, which is the same as light to Me, is night so far as its use to mortals is concerned.

Another comment: In one place in Scripture it is written *And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt* (Exod. 12:29); but elsewhere Scripture says, *On the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt*²⁵ (Num. 8:17), a verse which leads one to suppose that the first-born of Egypt died during the daytime. How are the

Isaac asks a question: Since Egypt is described as falling during the day, what can be meant by the statement that at midnight the first-born were smitten? This question is answered by R. Johanan ben Zakkai that by “day” night can be meant; and by R. Joshua that for God the night and the day are one and the same.

21. JV: “destruction.” But the word can also mean “sun.”

22. No, Noph, and Tehaphnehes are mentioned in Ezek. 30:13, 14, and 18.

23. So Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, p. 414. Apparently a play on *heres* in the sense of “sherd.”

24. Accordingly, even an incident which took place in the night could be spoken of as having occurred on the day.

25. “Another comment . . . *the land of Egypt*”—MC, on the basis of parallel in Yalkut, *Bēhā’alōfēka*, 720.

two verses to be reconciled? As follows: At nightfall the first-born were smitten with a death-stroke, so that they were in convulsions throughout the night and died on the following day. And the proof? Scripture does not say, "We are all dead men," but *We are all dying men* (Exod. 12:33), that is, dying hour by hour.

As for the repetition of the verse *On the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt* (Num. 8:17) in the verse *On the day that I smote all the first-born in the land of Egypt I hallowed unto Me all the first-born in Israel* (Num. 3:13), you may say that God meant: On the day that the first-born of Egypt died, and only on that day, did I hallow unto Me all the first-born [of Israel to minister as My priests].²⁶

5. *The Lord smote all the first-born* (Exod. 12:29)—all: a man's first-born and a woman's first-born, whether the first-born was a male or the first-born was a female. How so? If one man cohabited with ten women and they had given birth to ten sons, <or if ten men cohabited with one woman who had given birth to ten sons>, all were considered first-born males.

Now suppose that in a household there was no first-born, neither of the man nor of the woman, neither a first-born male nor a first-born female. How would then the verse *There was not a house where there was not one dead* (Exod. 12:30) be justified? R. Abba bar Aḥa explained: Then the one who had charge of the household was smitten, such a one as is referred to in the verse *Shimri the one in charge—for though he was not the first-born, yet his father put him in charge* (1 Chron. 26:10).

[Not only was the one in charge smitten]. R. Nathan taught: It was customary in an Egyptian household that when a first-born died, a statue of him was wrought for the house he had lived in. Hence, on the day the Lord smote the first-born, this

26. That is, they were hallowed on that day; but first-born born after that day were not hallowed again during their sojourn in the wilderness. Whether during their sojourn in the wilderness subsequently born first-born were hallowed or not, is a controversy between R. Johanan and Resh Lakish—the latter holding that in the wilderness there was no hallowing of first-born. See B.Beḳ 4b and 5a. See also Yalkuṭ Num. 8:17, and MhG Num., pp. 184–85.

statue was smashed, broken up into fragments, and scattered. And for the father of the dead first-born, the statue's destruction was as grievous as though he had buried his first-born that very day.²⁷

R. Yudan went further, saying: Since the Egyptians buried their dead in their houses, [on the day the first-born were smitten] dogs, entering through sewer pipes,²⁸ dragged the bodies of the first-born out of the burial niches and sported grotesquely with them. And for the fathers of the dead first-born, the dogs' sport was as grievous as though they had buried their first-born that very day.

*At midnight . . . the Lord smote all the first-born . . . from the first-born of Pharaoh [that was to sit on his throne]*²⁹ (Exod. 12:29). From this verse it follows that Pharaoh himself was a first-born.

All the first-born gathered around their fathers, and pleaded with them: "Now that Moses has said *All the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die* (Exod. 11:5), and all that he had predicted heretofore concerning the Egyptian people has befallen them, we must bestir ourselves and get these Hebrews out of our midst. Else the Egyptian people will die." The fathers replied: "Each one of us has ten sons; let one of them die, just so that the Hebrews be not permitted to get out."³⁰ The first-

27. According to Egyptian belief, "the dead retained some form of life as long as his image existed." The Egyptian father, therefore, regarded the destruction of the first-born's statue as his son's second death. See Saul Lieberman in "After Life In Early Rabbinic Literature," *Harry Austryn Wolfson Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem, 1965), 2, 523, n. 72.

28. The word *kuk*, "niche," is emended to read *byb*, "sewer pipe," which is the reading in the parallel account in *Mekilta de-R. Simeon*, ed. Epstein-Melamed, p. 29; see also *Mekilta de-R. Ishmael*, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 44, n. 12.

29. The words *that was to sit on his throne* are unnecessary, according to the commentator, unless construed as indicating that every Pharaoh had to be a first-born. The Pharaoh of the exodus, however, though first-born, did survive, in keeping with the purpose stated in the verse *But in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, to show thee My power, and that my Name may be declared throughout all the earth* (Exod. 9:16). Cf. *Mek*, 1, 97, 99-100; and *MhG* Exod., p. 207.

30. So emended in *SPR* where *tkwm 'l* is changed to *ypkwn*. As the text stands, it might be translated "just so [freedom] shall not be given to the Hebrews."

born then said: "There is a way to settle the matter: let us go to Pharaoh, himself a first-born, who may take pity upon himself and let these Hebrews get out of our midst."

They went to Pharaoh and said to him: "Since Moses has said *All the first-born . . . shall die*; and since all that he had predicted heretofore concerning the Egyptian people has befallen them, rise up and let these Hebrews get out of our midst. Else the Egyptian people will die."

But Pharaoh said to [his servants]: "Go to and beat these poltroons until their backs are broken"; and to the first-born he said: "I have sworn: 'My life or the lives of the Hebrews!' And you dare speak thus!"

At once the first-born went out and slew sixty myriads of their fathers. Of this it is written *To Him that smote Egypt with their first-born* (Ps. 136:10). Scripture does not say here "To Him that smote the first-born of Egypt," but says, *To Him that smote Egypt with their first-born*. It was the first-born of Egypt that slew sixty myriads of their fathers.

R. Abun said in the name of R. Judah ben Pazzi: Bithiah the daughter of Pharaoh was a first-born. By what merit did she escape death? Through the merit of Moses' prayer for her. Of her it is written "She perceived that [Moses], who was called a goodly child,³¹ was a shield, and that therefore her lamp had not gone out by night"³² (Prov. 31:18). Since the word for "night" is spelled here not, as is customary, *laylah*, but *layil*, the verse is to be read in the light of another verse where *layil* is also exceptionally used. This other verse, *It was a night (layil) of watching unto the Lord* (Exod. 12:42), refers to the night when the first-born of Egypt were smitten. [Hence it is assumed that on this night Bithiah's lamp did not go out—that is, her life was spared.]³³

31. Cf. Exod. 2:2.

32. JV: *She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her lamp goeth not out by night*. See Exod. Rabbah 18:3. The word *shr*, usually rendered "her merchandise," may also be understood as "shield."

33. The Scriptural proof for the tradition that Bithiah escaped death on the night of the plague of the first-born seems to run as follows: Bithiah was one

Even unto the first-born of the maidservant that is behind the mill (Exod. 11:5). R. Huna and R. Aḥa [taught] in the name of R. Eleazar the son of R. Jose the Galilean: Smitten even were the first-born of maidservants, who, forced to bend over³⁴ mills, used to say, "We are glad to remain in slavery so long as Israel remains in slavery, [particularly so long as Israel's well-born women remain in slavery]." The Egyptian maidservants were alluding to women such as Serah daughter of Asher,³⁵ who, according to traditional Agadah—so said R. Judah ben Pazzi—upon coming down into Egypt, was enslaved and forced to bend over a mill.

And all the first-born of cattle (Exod. 11:5). Men sinned, to be sure; but how can cattle be said to have sinned? Since the Egyptians worshiped the ram, however, [the first-born of their cattle were smitten] in order that the Egyptians should be unable to say: It is our deity who has brought this punishment upon us. Our deity is strong, and can stand up for itself, as is shown by the fact that this punishment did not come upon such animals as represent it.

6. *And it came to pass at midnight* (Exod. 12:29).> R. Huna and R. Joshua bar Abin, the son-in-law of R. Levi, taught in the name of R. Levi: The Master of Mercy, [in His exercise of justice], does not at first take human life. From whose experience can you learn this? From Job's—[his oxen and asses were smitten before he was. Scripture begins the story of Job by saying]: *There came a messenger unto Job and said: The oxen*

of 22 women whose virtues matched the virtues of "the woman of valor" described in Prov. 31 (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 258). Accordingly, a reference to Bithiah may properly be sought in that chapter from the Book of Proverbs. This reference, it is believed, occurs in the words *Her candle goeth not out by night*.

34. Reading with Parma MS *mḥwndwt* instead of *mwḥnwt*. See also MhG Num., p. 185.

35. Of Jacob's immediate family Serah was the only one who not only came to Egypt, but lived through the entire period up to the exodus (see Ginzberg, *Legends*, index, s.v. "Serah"). Her experience thus symbolizes the travail of her people.

were plowing, and the asses feeding beside them (Job 1:14). How is it possible that while the oxen were plowing the asses should be feeding beside them? R. Hama bar Hanina explained: Something of an anticipation of the world-to-come was provided for Job, as it is said "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when one that ploweth shall come near one that reapeth" (Amos 9:13).

<And the Sabeans made a raid, and took [the oxen and the asses] away; yea, they have slain the servants with the edge of the sword (Job 1:15).> According to R. Abba bar Kahana, the oxen and the asses taken away by the Sabeans from the village of Karnaim, [the home of Job], were led through the district of Abela in its entirety, and when they got to Magdala of the Dyers³⁶ they died there.³⁷

<And I only am escaped alone (ibid.).> Since, according to R. Aha, the word *only* (*raḳ*), denoting limitation, here implies "at the expense of," Scripture is suggesting that he who escaped, escaped at the expense of having his limbs broken and his body beaten.

R. Yudan said: The words *And I only am escaped alone to tell thee* mean that as soon as he told his tidings, even he who managed to escape died immediately afterwards, as is intimated in the words which follow: *This one had enough strength left in him to speak*³⁸ *until there came also another* (Job 1:16), who reported that *The Chaldeans set themselves in three bands*, etc., (Job 1:17). As soon as Job heard this news, he began to draw up his armies for battle, but reconsidered, saying, *I was*

36. Karnaim, just south of Sheikh Sa'ad in the Peraea, was said to have been the home of Job. Abela was south of the Yarmuk, the northernmost tributary of the Jordan. Magdala of the Dyers lay southeast of Tiberias, near Geder, one of the cities in the Decapolis, the region east of the Jordan. See Lev. Rabbah 17:4 (M, p. 379, n. 3; map, ibid., part 5, p. xxix); Lev. Rabbah, Soncino tr., p. 218, n. 4; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 385-86.

37. Concerning the oxen and the asses the text simply says that they were taken away. To obviate the suggestion that Job might have got other servants and recovered his oxen and asses, the commentator states that it was impossible for Job to do so, since the oxen and the asses had died.

38. JV: *while he was yet speaking*.

about to break a great multitude and the most contemptible of families which would terrify me; but then I kept silence, and went not out of the door (Job 31:34). Job meant that the Chaldean nation was the most contemptible in the entire family of nations: "Behold, the land of the Chaldeans—this is the people that was not" (Isa. 23:13), (of whom God Himself said, "Would that it had not been!"). "This is the nation that would cast its terror upon me?" said Job, [but at the same moment realized the full meaning of the words previously reported to him, namely] *A fire of God is fallen from heaven* (Job 1:16), and so he went on: "If this is God's exercise of justice, what can I do? Thereupon *I kept silence, and went not out of the door.*"

Immediately thereafter, as the text says, [Job was smitten with sore boils from the sole of his foot even unto his crown], *And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself therewith* (Job 2:8).

In the same order, God's exercise of justice befell Mahlon and Chilion—that is, first their horses died, and then their camels and their asses; after that the father died, *And Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died* (Ruth 1:3); and then his two sons died: *And Mahlon and Chilion died, both of them* (Ruth 1:5).³⁹

So, too, God exercises justice in the order of the divine plagues which are visited upon men. God begins first with a man's house. If the man repents, the requirement is no more than that the stones of the house, stones discolored by the plague, be taken out: *Then the priest shall command that they take out the stones* (Lev. 14:40). If the man does not repent, the requirement is that the stones [and the house itself] be broken down: *And he shall break down the house, the stones of it* (Lev. 14:45). Next, God begins on the man's garments. If the man repents, the requirement is no more than that the part of the garment spotted by the plague be rent out: *The priest . . . shall rend it out of the garment or the skin* (Lev. 13:56). But if the man does not repent, the requirement is that the garment be burnt: *And he shall burn the garment* (Lev. 13:52). Then God begins on the man's body. If the man repents, [he will be cured

39. I follow Friedmann in deleting the words "And after that she also died."

of his leprous-like scalls, and being free to get about, it can be said of him] *He that owneth the house shall come and tell the priest* (Lev. 14:35); but if he does not repent, [stricken with leprosy], *he shall dwell alone; without the camp shall his dwelling be* (Lev. 13:46).⁴⁰

And it was likewise in Egypt. First, God's measure of justice took toll of the Egyptians' goods and property: *He smote their vines also and their fig-trees* (Ps. 105:33); *He gave over their cattle also to the hail* (Ps. 78:48). And afterwards, *He smote all the first-born in Egypt* (Ps. 78:51).⁴¹

7. R. Levi bar Zechariah taught in the name of R. Berechiah: God set upon the Egyptians with the tactics of warrior kings. First, He shut off their water conduits by turning the waters of the Nile into blood. Then He brought up loud voices to confuse them—frogs.⁴² After that He shot arrows at them—gnats.⁴³ And then He brought the legions upon them—all kinds of wild beasts. And then He deprived them of their source of food⁴⁴ by means of a very grievous murrain. And after that He flung burning stuff upon them—boils. And after that He shot stones at them from catapults—hail. And after that He arrayed the scalers of walls against them—locusts. And after that He put them in prisons—threw them into darkness. And then He led forth each and every one of the oldest among them and slew him—the plague of the first-born at midnight.

40. See Tos Neḡ 6:7; Saul Lieberman, *Tosefet riṣonim* (Jerusalem, 1939), 3, 193; and Maimonides' Code, X, III, xvi, 10 (YJS, 8, 203-04).

The order of the verses from Leviticus cited in the text does not seem to sustain the Rabbinic inference with regard to the order in which divine plagues are visited upon men. However, there is a hermeneutic rule that a Biblical verse may be taken to refer to a time earlier than the verse preceding it refers to. See MhG Gen., p. 38.

41. The verses cited from Psalms thus construe *The hail . . . smote both man and beast and every herb of the field* (Exod. 9:25) as meaning that the actual order of smiting was first herbage, then beast, and finally man.

42. The croaking of the frogs was said to have been harder to bear than the destruction which they wrought. Tanḥuma, *Bo'*, 4.

43. These penetrated into human beings. See Exod. 8:13.

44. See Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, p. 65.

8. [In further comment on the measure of God's justice], R. Levi, the son-in-law of R. Zechariah, taught in the name of R. Berechiah: *As at the report concerning Egypt, so they shall be startled at the fall of the Adversary (sr)* (Isa. 23:5). According to R. Eliezer, whenever the word *sr* is written with the *waw* in the middle it refers to the State of Tyre; and whenever, as here, it is spelled defectively, Scripture has reference to Rome, the wicked [adversary].

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama the son of R. Hanina: With the very means by which He punished the former He will punish the latter. As Egypt, blood, so too Edom [Rome], for it is written *And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke* (Joel 3:3). As Egypt, frogs, so too Edom: *The sound of an uproar from the city [of Rome]* (Isa. 66:6). As Egypt, boils, so too Edom: *Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet* (Zech. 14:12). As Egypt, all kinds of wild beasts, so too Edom: *The pelican and the bittern shall possess it* (Isa. 34:11). As Egypt, gnats, so too Edom: *The streams thereof shall be turned into pitch*⁴⁵ (Isa. 34:9). As Egypt, pestilence, so too Edom: *And this shall be the pestilence wherewith the Lord will smite all the peoples that have warred against Jerusalem* (Zech. 14:12). As Egypt, hail,⁴⁶ so too Edom: *I will cause to rain upon [Gog] . . . an overflowing shower and great hailstones* (Ezek. 38:22). As Egypt, locusts, so too Edom: *Speak unto the birds of every sort . . . Assemble yourselves . . . that ye may eat flesh and drink blood* (Ezek. 39:17). As Egypt, darkness, so too Edom with darkness: *He shall stretch over it the line of [dark] chaos and the plummet of emptiness* (Isa. 34:11). As with Egypt He took the chiefest among them and slew them, so too Edom: *And a great slaughter in the land of Edom, among them to come down shall be the Remim*⁴⁷ (Isa. 34:6-7), that is, as R. Meir

45. Whose touch upon human skin will sting and burn like the sting of a gnat.

46. "so too Edom: *And this shall be . . . As Egypt, hail*"—Parma MS.

47. JV: *wild oxen*.

expounded it,⁴⁸ the Romans, pre-eminent among all the peoples of Edom.

R. Aḥa bar Kahana said: For three days darkness and thick darkness were called upon to serve in Egypt, but otherwise dark chaos and confusion have not been summoned to serve in this world. And where will dark chaos and confusion be called again into service? In the great city of Rome: *And He shall stretch over it the line of [dark] chaos, and the plummet of emptiness* (Isa. 34:11).

And the Rabbis say: The nations of the earth which have not accepted the Torah that was given out of darkness over Sinai, of them Scripture says, *Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples* (Isa. 60:2). But Israel, who accepted the Torah that was given out of darkness over Sinai, of them Scripture says, *But upon thee the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee* (ibid.).

48. "as R. Meir expounded it"—Parma MS.

SUMMARY

The 'omer as asserting that God alone
is the source of substance

The Sages were about to suppress the Book of Ecclesiastes, because they found in it ideas such as *What profit hath a man of all his labor wherein he laboreth under the sun?* (Eccles. 1:3), ideas which savored of heresy. But they decided otherwise after probing more deeply into the meaning of the text.

Comments on the phrase *under the sun* include observations concerning the unnoticed work of God who causes winds to blow, clouds to rise, rains to come down, dews to bespangle plants, plants to spring up, and fruits to grow plump. In appreciation of His work Jews exercised great care in offering the sheaf of barley on the second day of Passover in acknowledgment of God's gift of crops in the field. It is noted that when God gave Israel the 'omer of manna in the wilderness, He gave one to each of them, whereas all He asks in return is one 'omer from all of them together (Secs. 1-2).

Substance comes ultimately from the Lord, and when He chooses, He takes it away, as is seen from what happened to Amraphel (Nimrod), who acquired his substance through violence; to Pharaoh, who acquired his through trade; to Sihon and Og, who got theirs through hard work; to Sisera, who got his through good fortune; to Senacherib—through wisdom; to Haman—through happenstance; to the thirty-one kings of Canaan—through inheritance. The 'omer is intended to give expression to the faith that God alone is the source of substance (Sec. 3).

The intent in waving the 'omer toward the four points of the compass and up and down is set forth. The importance of the precept of the 'omer is emphasized through the following examples: because of his obedience to the precept of the 'omer, Abraham won the right of possessing the land of Canaan; by the tenth part of an ephah of barley meal, the same amount as in the 'omer, God brings peace between a

husband and his wife, who has been proved innocent of infidelity; the offering of the 'omer stood by Israel in the days of Gideon, in the days of Hezekiah, in the days of Ezekiel, and in the days of Haman (Secs. 3-6).

*And the Lord spoke unto Moses . . .
Speak unto the children of Israel . . . Ye
shall bring the sheaf, [an 'omer], of the
first fruits of your harvest unto the
priest (Lev. 23:10).¹*

1. *What profit hath a man of all his labor wherein he laboreth under the sun* (Eccles. 1:3). R. Benjamin bar Levi said: The Sages were about to suppress the Book of Ecclesiastes,² having found in it ideas which savored of heresy. They said: Should Solomon have given utterance to such a thought as *What profit hath a man of all his labor wherein he laboreth under the sun*? This question might imply—might it not?—that Solomon meant to include labor in the study of Torah. But then the Sages decided otherwise, declaring: Had Solomon said *What profit hath a man of all labor* and refrained from being more precise, we might have suspected that he also meant to include labor in the study of Torah.³ However, by saying *of all his labor*, Solomon implied that there is no profit in a man's labor for himself, but in his laboring at the study of Torah there is profit.

R. Samuel bar Isaac said: The Sages were about to suppress the Book of Ecclesiastes, having found in it ideas which savored of heresy. They said: Should Solomon have given utterance to advice such as *Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth; and let thy*

1. At one time, so Friedmann maintains, Lev. 23:9-14 was the lesson for the second day of Passover, the day the first sheaves of barley were harvested and waved as an offering. See *JE*, 9, 398-99, *s.v.* "Omer."

2. To exclude it from the Biblical canon.

3. "said *What profit hath a man . . . in the study of Torah*"—MhG Gen., p. 795, according to which the somewhat disordered reading in Parma MS is corrected.

heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes (Eccles. 11:9)? Even though Moses said, *Go not about after your own heart and your own eyes* (Num. 15:39), Solomon said, *Walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of thine eyes*, as though all restraint were removed and there were neither justice nor Judge. Since Solomon went on to say, however, *But know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment* (Eccles. 11:9), [the Sages decided that] Solomon had spoken well after all.

Another comment on *What profit hath a man of all his labor . . . under the sun?* R. Yudan said: [The man who is concerned with things] under the sun will have no profit therefrom; but the man who is concerned with what is higher than the sun, [namely, with Torah], will have profit. For, as both R. Huna and R. Aḥa citing R. Ḥalafta said: Though such a man labors under the sun he gathers up [his reward] above the sun.

R. Levi and the Rabbis [read the verse *What profit hath a man of all his labor? . . . That he is under the sun*]. According to R. Levi, the verse implies that no matter how greatly men in this world extend themselves in the performance of religious duties and good deeds, it is reward enough for them that the Holy One causes the sun to shine for them, *That the sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down* (Eccles. 1:5). According to the Rabbis, the verse implies that no matter how greatly men in this world extend themselves in the performance of religious duties and good deeds, it is reward enough for them that [in the world-to-come] the Holy One will renew their countenances as the disk of the sun [is renewed each day]—*They that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might* (Judg. 5:31).⁴

R. Ammi said: The way it is with mankind, when a man buys a pound of meat, how much trouble he goes to and how much he puts himself out on its account, until he succeeds in cooking it! Yet while mortals are asleep in their beds, the Holy One causes winds to blow, clouds to rise, rains to come down, dews to bespangle plants, plants to spring up, fruits to grow

4. Cf. Lev. Rabbah 30:2, and MTeh 11:6.

plump—and you are asked to give Him in return no more than the 'omer of barley!⁵

R. Phinehas said: The way it is with mankind, when a man washes his cloak during the rainy season, how much trouble he goes to with it and how much he puts himself out in tending it, until he succeeds in drying the cloak. Yet while mortals are asleep in their beds, the Holy One causes winds to blow, clouds to rise, rains to come down, dew to bespangle plants, plants to spring up, fruits to grow plump—and you are asked to give Him in return no more than the 'omer of barley!⁶

R. Abin said:⁷ Come, behold what care Israel exercised in obedience to the precept of the sheaf of barley! As we learn in a Mishnah, "They reaped it, put it into baskets, and brought it to the Temple court. They used to expose it to fire to fulfill the ordinance that it should be *parched with fire* (Lev. 2:14). So R. Meir. But the Sages say: They used to beat it with reeds and with the stems of plants⁸ so that the grains should not be crushed. Then they put it into a [copper] pipe and the pipe was perforated so that the fire might get at all of the grains" (Men 10:4). Immediately afterwards, as we learn in the same passage in the Mishnah, "They spread it out in the Temple

5. R. Ammi and R. Phinehas seem to interpret the verse in Ecclesiastes: *For any man, what does the tenth, [the 'omer] ('srwn, "tenth," instead of ytrwn, "profit"), amount to, compared to all of God's work wherein He labors under the sun.*

6. The passage beginning with "But then the Sages decided otherwise" (above, p. 378) and ending with "and you are asked to give Him in return no more than the 'omer of barley" is found in Parma MS. In PE the equivalent is represented by the following: "On the other hand, they argued, if he had, etc., etc., as in Midrash Rabbah" (Eccles. Rabbah), to "and you are asked to give Me in return no more than the 'omer of barley!"

7. R. Abin seems to interpret the verse in Ecclesiastes as follows: *What is the tenth ('srwn, "tenth," instead of ytrwn, "profit") given [by Israel to the Lord, the tenth] in whose preparation Israel [in their use of fire, fire] that comes from the sun, exercise such care.*

In the play on *ytrwn* and *'srwn* R. Abin may also find Biblical proof for translating 'omer not as "sheaf," as the Septuagint translates it, but as a measure, specifically a tenth of an *ephah*, about a quart.

8. Instead of flails.

courtyard so that the wind blew over it.⁹ Then they put it into a grist mill¹⁰ and took therefrom a tenth [of an *ephah* of flour] which was then sifted through thirteen sieves" (*ibid.*).

R. Levi said: Behold, [God says], you have labored—you have plowed, sown, weeded and cropped, hoed and reaped, bound the sheaves, threshed and stacked the sheaves; still, if I brought not forth a little wind to winnow for you, how would you or any one else stay alive? And will you not pay Me a wage for the wind? After all, *What profit would there be [for a man] if he were to labor to make the wind blow?*¹¹ (Eccles. 5:15).

2. R. Eleazar taught: It is written *Neither say they in their heart: Let us now fear the Lord our God that hath given the former rain, and the latter in due season; [neither say they], He is the one who for weeks must maintain in our behalf conditions suitable for the harvest*¹² (Jer. 5:24). *That hath given*, that is, God gave you all [the rain needed], and do you think that henceforth you have no further need of Him? Remember *He is the one who for weeks must maintain in our behalf conditions suitable for the harvest*—no scorching heat, no blasting winds, and no noxious dews for the seven full weeks between Passover and Pentecost. In this connection R. Hiyya, citing the verse *Seven weeks shall they be—full ones* (Lev. 23:15),¹³ taught: When are the weeks considered full? When the period between Passover and Pentecost is completed by the priestly watch of

9. In order to cool the grains and dry them.

10. Which grinds very coarsely, so that only the husk is separated from the grain.

11. [Literally "Therefore, (if) you do not pay Me a wage for the wind (by laboring also in the study of Torah), *What profit?*" etc. Mere plowing, sowing, etc., is not enough to earn you wind. You must also do the labor of studying Torah, specifically in this case, the rules concerning the sheaf of barley. L. N.]

12. The rainy season ends on Passover. The wheat harvest follows about seven weeks later at the time of Pentecost. JV: *that keepeth for us the appointed weeks of the harvest.*

13. The first part of the verse reads: *And ye shall count you from the morrow after the day of rest (Hebrew Sabbath), from the day that ye brought the sheaf of waving.*

Jeshua alone, the ninth watch, so that no watch of Shecaniah's, the tenth watch, is needed to fill out the period.¹⁴

According to R. Joshua ben Levi, [God] said: I am thy watchman, and wilt thou not give Me the wage for watching over thee?

14. R. Hiyya's remark is levelled against the Sadducees in their controversy with the Pharisees over the date of Pentecost, which the Pharisees observed on the fiftieth day after the first day of Passover, and the Sadducees on the seventh Sunday after the Passover week. All agreed that Biblical law fixed the festival for the fiftieth day after the offering of the first sheaves of barley cut from the fields, but there was disagreement as to the time of that offering. The Pharisees asserted that that offering be made on the second day of Passover—the *morrow after the day of rest* (Lev. 23:11), that is, after the first day of Passover; the Sadducees, on the Sunday of the Passover week—the *morrow after the Sabbath* in the week of Passover.

Now if the first day of Nisan falls on a Sabbath, then Passover will begin on Sabbath eve, the sheaf offering will take place on a Sunday, and so will Pentecost. Under such circumstances, one uninitiated might assume that the Pharisees agreed with the practice of the Sadducees. But if the first day of Nisan falls on a weekday, then of course so will Pentecost, and the Pharisee practice will be clearly marked as differing from that of the Sadducees who observe Pentecost on a Sunday. (In order to differentiate the practice of the Pharisees from that of the Sadducees, it was also enjoined that when the day after Pentecost fell on a Sunday the High Priest was not to appear on that day in the Temple in his official garments, lest it seem that he was observing the Pentecost on the day set by the Sadducees [See D. Z. Hoffmann, *Wayyikra* (Jerusalem, 5714/1954), 2, 116, quoting B. Men 65a and Hag 17a]).

R. Hiyya speaks of this matter by reference to the shifts in the priestly watches. If the first day of Nisan falls on a Sabbath, then the offering of the *omer* will take place on a Sunday and Pentecost, too, the fiftieth day, will fall on a Sunday. Under such circumstances, on the tenth Sabbath—the one prior to Pentecost—from the new moon of Nisan, the ninth watch, that of Jeshua, will leave its post and be succeeded by the tenth watch, that of Shecaniah (see 1 Chron. 24:7 ff.). If, however, the first day of Nisan falls on a weekday, then Jehoiairib, the first watch, will come in on the following Sabbath, and Shecaniah, the tenth watch, will not come in until the Sabbath following Pentecost, thereby demonstrating clearly that the calendation of the Sadducees is disregarded. And so, by a kind of paradox, R. Hiyya asserts that it is the calendation of the Pharisees which is intimated in the Biblical prescription of seven full weeks. See Professor Saul Lieberman's explanation of R. Hiyya's statement in *Lev. Rabbah M, 4, 879*.

R. Hiyya probably reasons that in His concern for the safety of the harvest God would not have its beginning postponed to the Sunday following the Sabbath in the week of Passover. And so, according to R. Hiyya, this is another manifestation of God's wish to preserve for us conditions suitable for the harvest.

According to R. Berechiah, [God said]: I am thy cook, and wilt thou not let Me taste the dish prepared for thee, that I may know what is needed [for its seasoning]?¹⁵

God's attention to the grain is what David had in mind when he said: *As for rain, it was bounteous; now wave down*¹⁶ [dew], *O God, whereby Thou mayest give support to [Israel] Thine inheritance when it is weary* (Ps. 68:10). When the Land needed rain Thou gavest it bounteously; now that it needs dew, *wave down* [dew],¹⁷ *O God, whereby Thou mayest give support to Thine inheritance when it is weary.*

According to R. Bana'ah, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the children of Israel: My children, when I used to give you the 'omer [in the wilderness], I gave it to each one of you: *An 'omer a head, according to the number of your persons, shall ye take it, every man for them that are in his tent* (Exod. 16:16). But now that you are giving Me the 'omer, you are to give Me no more than one 'omer from all of you together. And not only this, but the 'omer is to be not of wheat but only of barley.¹⁸

Therefore, for all the reasons given above, Moses enjoins Israel, saying to them: *Ye shall bring the 'omer* (Lev. 23:10).

3. <*Ye shall bring the sheaf* (Lev. 23:10).> [These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere]: *Whose harvest the hungry eateth up, and taketh it, though without bucklers; and the allies trample upon their substance*¹⁹

15. According to R. Berechiah, delicate blending of atmosphere and dew is required for a succesful harvesting. The 'omer is thus a prayer to God to maintain conditions suitable for the harvest.

16. JV: *A bounteous rain didst Thou pour down.*

17. The waving of the sheaves of barley is thus taken to symbolize the prayer for the waving down of dew.

18. R. Bana'ah seems to interpret Eccles. 1:3 as saying, *What a profit hath man of all his labor wherein he laboreth under the sun*, the point being of course that "so far as any of the commandments are gifts, as it were, rendered to God, they are far smaller than God's gifts to man." See Montefiore, *RA*, p. 192.

19. JV: *and taketh it even out of the thorns, and the snare gapeth for their substance.* But *šinnim*, "thorns," can also mean "shield" or "buckler"; *šam-mim*, "snare," as a form of *šamaṭ*, can mean "to meet, to join," whence "allies" or "associates"; and *ša'af*, "gapeth," may be derived from *šuf*, "bruise, crush,"

(Job 5:5). By *whose harvest* Nimrod's²⁰ harvest is meant. And the phrase *the hungry eateth up* refers to Abraham, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take it though not with bucklers* imply that Abraham took Nimrod's power away not with a weapon nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is said "When Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he led forth his trained one,"²¹ born in his house—three hundred and eighteen—and pursued as far as Dan" (Gen. 14:14), that is, as R. Simeon ben Lakish explained in the name of Bar Kappara, [Abraham led forth] one man, Eliezer, the numerical value of the letters of Eliezer's name being three hundred and eighteen.²² *And the allies trample upon their substance.* Who was it that trampled upon Nimrod's substance? Abraham and all that were allied with him.

Another comment: By *whose harvest* Pharaoh's harvest is meant. And the phrase *the hungry eat up* refers to Moses and Aaron, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take it though not with bucklers* imply that they took Pharaoh's power away not with weapons nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is proved by the text, "And the Lord said unto Moses: Wherefore criest thou unto Me?" (Exod. 14:15). *And the allies trample upon their substance.* Who was it that trampled upon the wicked Pharaoh's substance? Moses and Aaron and all who were allied with them.

Another comment: By *whose harvest* Sihon's harvest and Og's harvest is meant. And the phrase *the hungry eat up* refers to Moses and Aaron, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take it though not with bucklers* imply that they took away the

whence "trample upon." See Judah J. Slotki's notes in Lev. Rabbah 28:4, Soncino tr., pp. 361, 362.

20. Nimrod is identified with Amraphel. See Rashi on Gen. 14:1.

21. JV: *trained ones*. But the *ḥēṭib* is "trained one." See Lekhaḥ Toḥ and Rashi.

22. Eliezer was Abraham's chief steward (see Gen. 15:2). The Hebrew letters 'alef = 1, lamed = 30, yod = 10, 'ayin = 70, zayin = 7, reš = 200, add up to 318. The implication is that four armies were destroyed by two men, leading to the conclusion that only by means of prayer had Abraham won his remarkable victory.

power of Sihon and Og not with weapons nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is proved by the text "And the Lord said unto Moses: Fear him not; for I have delivered him into thy hand" (Num. 21:34). *And the allies trample upon their substance.* Who was it that trampled upon Og's and Sihon's substance? Moses and Aaron and all that were allied with them.

Another comment: By *whose harvest* Sisera's harvest is meant. The phrase *the hungry eat up* refers to Deborah and Barak, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take it though not with bucklers* imply that they took Sisera's power away not with weapons nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is proved by the text, "They fought from heaven, the stars in their courses fought against Sisera" (Judg. 5:20). *And the allies trample upon their substance.* Who was it that trampled upon Sisera's substance? Deborah and Barak and all that were allied with them.

Another comment: By *whose harvest* Sennacherib's harvest is meant. The phrase *the hungry eat up* refers to Isaiah and Hezekiah, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take it though not with bucklers* imply that they took Sennacherib's power away not with weapons nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is proved by the text, "And Hezekiah the king, and Isaiah the prophet son of Amoz, prayed because of this, and cried to heaven" (2 Chron. 32:20). *And the allies trample upon their substance.* Who was it that trampled upon Sennacherib's substance? Hezekiah and Isaiah and all that were allied with them.

Another comment: By *whose harvest* Haman's harvest is meant. The phrase *the hungry eat up* refers to Mordecai and Esther, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take it though not with bucklers* imply that they took Haman's power away not with weapons nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is proved by the text, "And many lay in sackcloth and ashes" (Esther 4:3). *And the allies trample upon their substance.* Who was it that trampled upon Haman's

substance? Mordecai and Esther and all that were allied with them.

Another comment: By *whose harvest* is meant the harvest of the thirty-one kings. The phrase *the hungry eat up* refers to Joshua and Caleb, hungry for the word of God. And the words *take . . . though not with bucklers* imply that they took away the power of the thirty-one kings not with weapons nor with a shield, but with prayer and supplications to the Lord, as is proved by God's command to Joshua, "Get thee up; wherefore now art thou fallen upon thy face?" (Josh. 7:10). *And the allies trample upon their substance*. Who was it that trampled upon the substance of the thirty-one kings? Joshua and Caleb and all that were allied with them.

And by what merit did Israel earn the privilege of having the land of Canaan given to them? By the merit of harvesting the sheaf [and bringing the 'omer which is Israel's prayer and supplication to the Lord]. Hence Moses bids Israel: *Ye shall bring the sheaf*.²³

4/5. *And he shall wave the 'omer [of barley] before the Lord to be accepted* (Lev. 23:11). How was the 'omer waved? R. Hāmi bar 'Oḳba said in the name of R. Jose bar Hānina: It was waved toward the four points of the compass to nullify blasting winds; it was waved up and down to nullify noxious dews. On

23. The point of the homily is that substance comes from the Lord. And so, even though we came to a goodly land, its goodness cannot remain ours unless God maintains it in our hands. Now substance may be acquired in seven ways: (1) through robbery and violence, as Nimrod got his; (2) through trade, as Pharaoh acquired it, enlarging his fortune during the years of famine; (3) through diligence and hard work, as exemplified by Sihon and Og, whose people hired themselves out as soldiers to keep order (for this reason Sihon and Og, who had committed themselves to the kings of Canaan, did not permit the children of Israel to go through their lands); (4) through good fortune, enjoyed by Sisera, in whose behalf, prior to his engagement with Barak, even the stars fought in their courses; (5) through wisdom, in which Sennacherib excelled; (6) through happenstance, which was the way of Haman, whom the king singled out for preferment; and (7) through inheritance, which the 31 kings of Canaan possessed. Only the Lord is the source of substance, and the 'omer is intended to give expression to this faith. See *Yēleh to'ar* on Lev. Rabbah 28:4.

the other hand, R. Simon said in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi: It was waved toward the four points of the compass in recognition of Him to whom the whole world belongs; up and down in recognition that to Him belong the regions on high and the regions below.

According to R. Abin, the difference of opinion was [not between R. Jose bar Ḥanina and R. Joshua ben Levi, but] between R. Judah and R. Nehemiah.

R. Jacob bar Abaye said in the name of R. Judah bar Simon that R. Johanan and R. Simeon ben Laḳish had each his own teaching about the 'omer. R. Johanan taught: Let the precept of the 'omer of barley never seem trivial in your eyes. Because of obedience to the precept of the sheaf of barley Abraham won the right of possessing the land of Canaan, as is said *And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land of thy sojournings, all the land of Canaan* (Gen. 17:8), on condition that *thou shalt keep the covenant* (Gen. 17:9). And what was the covenant? The precept of the 'omer of barley.²⁴

R. Simeon ben Laḳish taught: Let the precept of the 'omer of barley never seem trivial in your eyes. By the tenth part of an *ephah* of barley meal, the same as makes up the 'omer, the Holy One, blessed be He, brings peace between a husband and a wife [who has been cleared of suspicion of infidelity]: *Then shall the man bring his wife unto the priest, and shall bring her offering for her, the tenth part of an ephah of barley bread* (Num. 5:15). And what grain must it be? The grain used in the observance of the 'omer.²⁵

24. The phrase *thou shalt keep the covenant* is apparently construed as referring to the sacrificial cult; and Israel's offering upon their entrance into Canaan (see Josh. 5:11) of an 'omer of barley, as the first performance of a cultic act in the Land of Israel. See *Torah šelema*, Gen., 3, 701.

25. In his n. 26 Friedmann explains that according to the Rabbis, the barley grain is symbolic of the heathen who have no self-restraint; the wheat grain, on the other hand, being cleft, is symbolic of the circumcised, of Israel (see Piska 10.3). And so, coming into the Land, Israel was called upon to offer the barley, to give up, as it were, its unrestrained living. In the relations of husband and wife, the giving up of the barley is symbolic of the giving up of unrestrained sexual desire manifesting itself in the wife's infidelity.

In the comments that follow, R. Abbahu—according to some it was R. Joshua ben Levi—R. Samuel bar Nahmani, and the Rabbis differ. R. Joshua ben Levi taught: It was this offering of the 'omer that stood by Israel in the days of Gideon, as is said *And when Gideon was come, behold, there was a man telling a dream, and lo, a cake (šēlil) of barley bread tumbled into the camp of Midian, and came unto the tent, and smote it that it fell, and turned it upside down, that the tent lay flat* (Judg. 7:13). What is meant by a šēlil of barley bread? The Rabbis explain that the generation of Gideon was bare (šēlil) of righteous men.²⁶ By obedience to what one precept was it saved (*nišsolu*)? By obedience to the precept symbolized by the šēlil²⁷ of barley bread. And just what is the precept? The precept of the 'omer of barley.²⁸

R. Samuel bar Nahman taught: It was this offering of the 'omer that stood by Israel in the days of Hezekiah: *And in every place where the appointed staff shall pass, which the Lord shall lay upon [Asshur], it shall be with tabrets and harps; and in battles of wielding will He fight along with them* (Isa. 30:32). But was Hezekiah's generation able to wage "battles of wielding (*tēnufah*)"?²⁹ No, but [God fought along with them] because of their obedience to the precept of the 'omer.³⁰

26. For even Gideon's father, one of the foremost men in his generation, had an altar of Baal. See Judg. 6:25.

27. "by the šēlil"—Parma MS.

28. The night was the night of the sixteenth of Nisan, the night of harvesting the sheaves of barley. See Rashi on Isa. 9:3.

29. The generation of Hezekiah was notoriously too weak to wage wars on a large scale. See 2 Kings 18:23, and Mah on Lev. Rabbah 28:6.

30. Which had to be waved (see above, Piska 18.4/5). The verb "to wave" is the same as the verb "to wield." Hence the analogy. The deliverance from Sennacherib is said to have taken place on the night preceding the sixteenth of Nisan. See Rashi on Isa. 9:2. The phrase *bmlhmt tnušh*, usually translated *battles of wielding*, is construed in this comment as "[barley] bread of waving." See Lev. Rabbah M, p. 661, n. 4.

Following the offering of the 'omer of barley which serves as food for animals, 50 days are counted to the next festival, celebrating the giving of Torah which is food for man and for his spirit. R. Samuel bar Nahman thus dwells on the precept of the 'omer as intended to inspire Israel to give up brutish ways of living and seek instead the ways of Torah—the kind of life

And the Rabbis taught: It was this 'omer of barley that stood by them in the days of Ezekiel: *Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and spelt, and put them in one vessel, and make thee bread thereof; according to the number of the days that thou shalt lie upon thy side, even three hundred and ninety days, shalt thou eat thereof* (Ezek. 4:9). In order to make *bread thereof* which of the three grains, wheat, barley, or spelt did he use most of? Ezekiel put most of barley into the dough,³¹ an excess of which, according to R. Samuel bar Nahman, brings on the runs.³² Samuel said: Over in Babylonia it is told that out of dough with an excess of barley they made a cake for a dog, but he would not eat it.

A Roman lady, in speaking to R. Jose ben Halafta, exclaimed: "What pain that righteous Ezekiel must have endured! And to think that every one of the great number of manservants and maidservants he had, looked down upon him because of the food and drink³³ he chose to live on!" R. Jose ben Halafta replied: "His pain was meant to make you understand that whenever Israel are in pain the righteous are in pain with them."³⁴

6. R. Levi taught: It is this 'omer of barley which stood by them in the days of Haman. When Mordecai saw Haman come toward him leading a horse,³⁵ he said: I have a feeling that this wicked man is coming to kill me. And he said to his disciples: "Flee, that ye be not scorched by my coal." They replied: "Whether for life or for death, we are with you." What did

in which the generation of Hezekiah excelled. See Piska 16.6; MTch 87:5; and *Yēfeh to'ar* on Lev. Rabbah 28:6.

31. If it is to be called bread, the mixture had to have more of either wheat, barley, or spelt. See Friedmann's note; and P. Hal 1:1.

32. "brings on the runs"—Parma MS; PE: "distresses the intestines."

33. "and drink"—Parma MS; P: "in the end."

34. The Rabbis who cite R. Jose ben Halafta's reply to the Roman lady seem to regard the 'omer of barley as a symbol of the suffering and self-denial which a great man willingly took upon himself, thereby to divert God's wrath from Israel that otherwise might have consumed Israel altogether. See B.Sanh 39a and R. Samuel Edels; and Piska 12.8.

35. See Piska 15.23, n. 126; and Esther 6:11.

Mordecai do? He wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and stood up to pray. The wicked Haman came and sat down with them—right in the middle of them. He asked them: "What are you so busy with?" They replied: "With the precept of the 'omer,'³⁶ which Israel used to offer in the Temple." He asked: "And what was that 'omer' made of—silver? gold? wheat? barley?" They replied: "Barley." He asked: "And what was its value—twenty talents? ten talents?"³⁷ They replied: "Ten farthings at most." He said to them: "Arise, for your ten farthings have prevailed over my ten thousand talents of silver."³⁸ Then, as soon as Mordecai finished praying, Haman said: "Come, put on this garment." Mordecai replied: "Would you insult royalty? Would a person put on royal robes without bathing first?"³⁹ So Haman went to seek a bath attendant, but could not find one. What did he do? He tied a menial's apron on him, set to, and bathed Mordecai. After Mordecai came out, Haman said: "Come, put on this crown." Mordecai replied: "Would you insult royalty? Would a man put on a crown without having had a haircut?" So Haman went looking for a barber, but could not find one. What did he do? He went to his house and brought barber's instruments, and as he sat down to cut Mordecai's hair, he began to sigh. Mordecai asked: "Why are you sighing?" He replied: "Alas for the father of a man who once had the power to appoint the superintendent of the palace,⁴⁰ and to appoint the officer who arranged the king's appointments, but now has become a bath attendant and a barber!" Mordecai said: "What cause for wonder is this? Did I not see him, the father of this man, work for twenty-two years as bath attendant and barber at the village of Karnaim?"⁴¹ Indeed, you found and are using

36. The day was the sixteenth of Nisan, on which day the 'omer' used to be brought (Lev. 23:10-11). See *Esther Rabbah*, chap. 10.

37. A talent = 3,000 shekels = 100,000 sesterces.

38. Which Haman gave the king as the price of the Jews. See *Esther* 3:9.

39. For three days Mordecai had been fasting, and was therefore unable to bathe.

40. See Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, p. 509b.

41. See *Piska* 17.6.

on me the barber's instruments that belonged to him." Haman said: "Rise up, ride on this horse." Mordecai replied: "I have no strength, for I am an old man, and you brought this waiting on me upon yourself." Haman said: "Rise and mount the horse. I will lower my neck, and you tread on me, and get up and ride, thus fulfilling the promise made to your people, *And thou shalt tread upon the backs of their necks*"⁴² (Deut. 33:29). As Mordecai rode upon the horse, he began to praise the Holy One, blessed be He: *I will extol Thee, O Lord, for Thou hast raised me up, and hast not suffered mine enemies to rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried unto Thee, and Thou didst heal me; O Lord, Thou broughtest up my soul from the nether-world; Thou didst keep me alive, that I should not go down to the pit* (Ps. 30:2-4). And his disciples, what did they say? *Sing praise unto the Lord, O ye His godly ones, and give thanks to His holy name. For His anger is but for a moment, His favor is for a lifetime; weeping may tarry for the night, but joy cometh in the morning* (Ps. 30:5-6). And that wicked Haman, what did he say? *Now I had said in my security: "I shall never be moved." Thou hadst established, O Lord, in Thy favor my mountain as a stronghold—Thou didst hide Thy face; I was affrighted* (Ps. 30:7-8). And Esther, what did she say? *Unto Thee, O Lord, did I call, and unto the Lord I made supplication: What profit is there in my blood, etc.?* (Ps. 30:9-10). And Israel, what did they say? *Hear, O Lord, and be gracious unto me; Lord, be Thou my helper. Only Thou canst turn for me my mourning into dancing* (Ps. 30:11-12).

R. Isaac said in the name of R. Phinehas: [When Haman came with the royal steed], Mordecai was engaged in the reading of the *Shema'* and he did not stop, as is said *So that my glory may sing praise unto Thee, and not become silent; O Lord my God, I will give thanks unto Thee for ever* (Ps. 30:13).

42. IV: upon their high places.

SUMMARY

The exactness of God's retribution

As a man must repay another for unlawful use of what the other had left in his keeping, so Pharaoh, in whose keeping Israel had been left, was made to repay. Indeed, the arm he put forth against Israel was broken. Accordingly, Israel should not despair of redemption. When Israel's time comes, they will be released from the kingdoms' power, even as they were released from Pharaoh's power and heard the mouth which had denied God acclaim Him, and the mouth which had vowed never to let Israel go promise to provide escort for them (Sec. 1). God's retribution is precise: in the end the wicked are broken by God and forced to retract the boasts they made right to His face (Sec. 2).

*And it came to pass, when Pharaoh
put the people to his own use*¹ (Exod.
13:17).²

1. Let our master teach us: If a man unlawfully put to his own use something which another left in his keeping, how is he to repay? Our Masters of the Mishnah taught as follows: "If a man unlawfully put to his own use what had been left in his keeping, then, according to the School of Shammai, whether its value had fallen in the meantime or risen in the meantime, the man is penalized by having to repay at the higher

1. JV: *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go.* But *šlh* may mean "let go," and in the phrase *šlh yd* may also mean "put to one's own use."

2. Exod. 13:17-15:26 is the lesson in Scripture for the seventh day of Passover (see B.McG 31a), the day on which, according to Jewish tradition, the children of Israel crossed the Red Sea and sang the song of Moses (Exod. 15).

value. According to the School of Hillel, [he has to repay at the value it had] when he unlawfully put it to his own use. According to R. 'Aqiba, at its value when claimed by its owner" (BM 3:12).

Our Rabbis taught further: Indeed, whenever a man high-handedly puts to his own use something left in his keeping by his fellow, he deserves to have his arm broken.³ From what example do you learn this? From the example of Pharaoh, for Israel was left in his keeping, and when he sought to put forth his hand against them, the Holy One, blessed be He, broke his arm, as is said *Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt* (Ezek. 30:21). And whence do we know that Israel were left in Pharaoh's keeping? Because God Himself told Moses to say to Israel: *I have surely left you in keeping*⁴ (Exod. 3:16). Now because Israel were despairing of redemption, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Go tell them that even as the owner of a thing left in another's keeping may, whenever he wishes, take back what he left, so you will be taken back—when your time comes, I shall forthwith release you from Pharaoh's power.

Israel then said: Master of universes, but see how he denies Thee and refuses to let us go, saying *I know not the Lord, and moreover I will not let Israel go* (Exod. 5:2). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: As you live, you are to have the satisfaction of seeing the mouth which said *Who is the Lord?* (*ibid.*), say finally *The Lord is righteous* (Exod. 9:27); and the mouth which said *I know not the Lord*, say finally *Entreat the Lord* (Exod. 9:28); and the mouth which said *Moreover I will not let Israel go*, finally take hold of the hand of each Israelite and escort him out. Whence do we know of this escort? From what we read as the lesson for the day: *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh arranged escort for the people*⁵ (Exod. 13:17).

3. See B.Sanh 58b, which quotes *The arm raised high [to rob deserves] to be broken* (Job 38:15).

4. JV: *I have surely remembered you.*

5. Now translated in a different way from the beginning of the Piska. See Mek 1, 169.

2. *And it came to pass, when Pharaoh arranged escort for the people.* R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: *Say unto God: "How awesome are Thy works!"* (Ps. 66:3). R. Johanan said in the name of R. Eliezer son of R. Jose the Galilean: As we say to a good worker, "Well-done, well-done indeed!" so too *Say unto God*, etc. And our Masters, elaborating on the comment, said: They that were to be slain, slew; they that were to be destroyed, destroyed; and they that were to be hanged, hanged. Haman prepared a tree for Mordecai, intending to rise up early and hang him thereon, and to be sure, arose early, but he himself was hanged upon the tree. Hence *Say unto God: "How awesome are Thy works!"*

The Psalm continues *Say unto God: . . . "Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies crumble away before Thee"* (*ibid.*). According to the Rabbis, *Thine enemies shall crumble away before Thee* means that Thine enemies shall be broken before Thee. When a wicked one comes along in the fullness of his strength to boast right in Thy face of the greatness of his power, he will surely be broken by the greatness of Thy power. But according to R. Berechiah, the verse in the Psalm means that Thine enemies will feel constrained to deal falsely with Thee, in much the same sense of the words *and deal falsely⁶ with his neighbor* (Lev. 5:21). Hence in the Psalm David meant: Master of the universe, when the wicked come to open their big mouths right in Thy face, they will have to turn back on their own words, falsifying and twisting them, and they will be utterly shamed.

You will find the same to be true of many wicked men who rose up in the world: They opened their big mouths right in the face of the Holy One, blessed be He, and the Holy One, blessed be He, put them to shame in the very things they opened their mouths about, so that they had to turn back on their own words, falsifying and twisting the words.⁷ Nebuchad-

6. The same root *khs*, used in both verses, means in one "to crumble, to be reduced," and in the other "to deny, to deal falsely."

7. "who rose up in the world . . . twisting the words"—Parma MS.

nezzar—at the beginning when he became perturbed about Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, what did he ask them? He asked: *Who is the god that shall deliver you out of my hands?* (Dan. 3:15). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: O wicked one, thou didst boast before the nations⁸ saying: *Who is the god?* When the measure of justice is carried out against thee, thou wilt say to the nations:⁹ *He is God* (Dan. 6:27).

Accordingly David said: *Say unto God, "How awesome are Thy works! Through the greatness of Thy power shall Thine enemies crumble away before Thee."*

8. "the nations"—Parma MS; 'wmr in P is a miswriting for 'wmwt, "nations."

9. "to the nations"—Parma MS.

SUMMARY

Moses' journey through Heaven

When the Torah was given to Israel, all the terrified inhabitants of the world gathered about Balaam who reassured them: No flood of fire was on the way—God was shining forth to give wisdom and instruction to His people.

The Torah was given in the month of Sivan whose zodiacal sign is Twins, a symbol signifying that human beings are both to speak the words of Torah and to rejoice in them. Because the Torah was given to the inhabitants of the earth, the heavens, from whom the Torah had been taken away, were sad (Sec. 1).

The zodiacal signs of Nisan, Iyar, and Sivan provide a key to the order of the world's creation; and the zodiacal signs of the other nine months represent phases in the life of man, with Israel as the highest type of man.

The sequence of creation—the sun first, and Mercury-and-Venus next—signifies that originally the world was intended to be lighted by one luminary, the same by night as by day, and that mankind was to have been androgynous. In further interpretation, Mercury is construed as the male principle personified in Abraham who in wisdom gives guidance to all the world. The moon, created next, is taken to represent Israel which reflects the light of Abraham. Then Saturn, Jupiter, and Mars are taken to represent subsequent phases of Israel's history, culminating with Israel's vindication.

When God gave the Torah to Israel, the hosts on high rejoiced, but He was sad, for He knew that soon the children of Israel would violate the command *Thou shalt have no other gods* (Exod. 20:3). Moses' reason for breaking the Tables of the Torah at the foot of the Mount is set forth by means of a parable (Sec. 2). The parable is followed by a discourse on the Temple which like the Tables of the Torah was destroyed, but which will one day be rebuilt by God Himself and never again be destroyed (Sec. 3).

Details are then given of Moses' experiences on high when he went up to receive the Torah: At the gate of the firmament Kemuel sought to stop him. Then Hadarniel frightened Moses so that God had to intervene. God stationed Himself in front of Sandalphon and his fires until Moses passed by. Further on in Moses' journey, Rigyon, the river of fire, came against him, and God led him past it and past Gallizur, out of whose mouth comes word of the evil that has been decreed for men. Finally, when angels of destruction, resentful of his presence in heaven, sought to burn Moses with the breath of their mouths, God spread something of His own splendor about Moses and told him to explain to the ministering angels why he was in heaven. His reply was accepted, and the angel of death even taught Moses how to stand between the dead and the living.

God then opened the seven firmaments and showed Moses the Sanctuary on high and the four colors He had used for the Tabernacle. He opened the portals of the seven firmaments and appeared over them and over Israel in His full glory. When Israel heard *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2), their souls at once departed from them. But God made descend the dew which will quicken the souls of the righteous at the resurrection, and thus revived the children of Israel. In revealing Himself to Israel face to face, God made sure that Israel would not be led astray to worship other gods (Sec. 4).

The Ten Commandments

<Introductory part:> The Parashah dealing with the giving of Torah.¹

1. The holy spirit spoke through Solomon, king of Israel, saying: *His tablets [of ten lines resemble rows] in a terrace garden of spices; they have as many subtle points and matters as a garden has fragrances; the lips of the Sages who occupy themselves with Torah disseminate subtle interpretations on every*

1. This is the first of a group of six Piskas which deal with the Ten Commandments. These six Piskas may have been intended for perusal during the six weeks between Passover and Pentecost—the festival commemorating the giving of Torah at Sinai. See Friedmann's n. 23 at the end of Piska 24.

*aspect thereof, and the words of their mouths are as choice myrrh*² (Song 5:13). Of what event was Solomon speaking in this verse? He could have been speaking only of the time the Torah was given. When the Torah was given to Israel, all the inhabitants of the world were frightened³ and gathered themselves about the wicked Balaam. They asked him: Is God, perchance, about to bring a flood [of fire] to the world? Is the world to be utterly condemned as of yore?⁴ The wicked Balaam opened his mouth before the sons of⁵ Belial, and thus gave reply: Fear not, O ye kings of the earth; and be not affrighted, O ye princes of the world. He who in His glory inhabits the skies is revealing Himself in mercy to His children; and shines forth to give Torah, which is both wisdom and instruction, to His people, to His beloved ones.

And why was the Torah given during Sivan and not in Nisan or⁶ during any one of the other months? What parable applies as an answer to this question? That of a king who was arranging the festivities for his daughter's wedding. And a man, one of the royal dignitaries, said: "It would be seemly for the princess, after she is seated in the palanquin, to have

2. The above is a paraphrase from Targum Jonathan which, according to Friedmann, is the sense of the passage as the commentator understood it. JV: *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs; his lips are as lilies dropping sweet myrrh.* In the Targum the word for "cheek," *lehi*, is taken in the sense of *luah*, "tablet"; the word for "banks," *migdalot*, is read as though vocalized *meḡaddēlot*, "they have many"; and the word for "lilies," *šōʾannim*, is read as though written *šēi-šōnim*, "men who study," that is "Sages."

3. They were frightened by the intense fire coming from Sinai. This explanation is to be derived from the last part of the verse quoted above, *for the words of their mouths are as choice myrrh* can be read as *the words of their mouths are as myrrh on fire*. The word '*br*, "choice," is here read as though written *b'r*, "on fire." See '*Aruk*, s.v. *ʾšf*.

Later in this Piska, at the beginning of Section 3, the word '*br* will be construed as meaning "passes away."

These several meanings of '*br* are admissible because its precise sense in the context of Song 5:13 is difficult to ascertain.

4. So God used to judge the world until the days of Abraham. See Sif Deut. 311.

5. "the sons of"—MSS.

6. "in Nisan or"—MSS and SPR.

her ride on an elephant and so raise her among all the nobles of the kingdom." Another answered and said: "An elephant stands high, but is without splendor. A horse, however, is beautiful—it has splendor as well as beauty.⁷ And since the princess is lovely, it would be more seemly to have her mount a horse and thus show her loveliness among all the notables of the kingdom." Then a man spoke up and said: "An elephant stands high, and a horse is comely; but neither has a mouth to speak with, hands to clap together, nor feet to dance with. Hence it is fitting for me to extol the princess, for I have a mouth to speak with, hands to clap together, and feet to dance with;⁸ and so I would have her mount on my shoulders to display her loveliness." Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, did not give the Torah in Nisan nor in Iyar, because the sign of Nisan in the Zodiac is a Lamb, and the sign of Iyar is an Ox, and it is not fitting for them to extol and praise the Torah. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah in Sivan, because the sign of Sivan is Twins, and the Twins are human, and being human have mouths to speak with, and hands to clap together, and feet to dance with.

Now when the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel, the earth rejoiced but the heavens wept. And why did the earth rejoice and the heavens weep? Consider the analogy of a king who was arranging the festivities for his daughter's wedding. The city folk did not come near and did not offer praise. But the village folk came and offered praise to the king with harps and lyres and all kinds of musical instruments. A herald came forth and stood before the king and said: As things go in the world, it is city folk who know the glory of the king—it would be fitting for them to acclaim the princess.

And so it was with the Holy One, blessed be He. When He gave the Torah to Israel, the earth offered praise, but the heavens did not offer praise. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to

7. "stands high . . . splendor as well as beauty"—Cas; PE: "stands high, and so the princess will not appear impressive."

8. "Hence it is fitting for me . . . to dance with"—MSS and SPR.

the heavens: You who are set in the heights—you ought to acclaim My glory and My daughter more than the earth does.

The heavens replied: The earth should offer praise, for the Torah is being given to it; but we from whom it goes forth, are we to offer praise? Should we not rather be sad? Thus it is said: *Lord, when Thou wentest forth out of Seir, when Thou marchedst forth out of the field of Edom, the earth trembled, but the heavens dropped [tears]* (Judg. 5:4).⁹

2. Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, create His world in Nisan and not create it in Iyar? Because at the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, wished to create His world He said to the Prince of darkness: "Get thee hence from Me, for I desire the world's creation to begin with light," the Prince of darkness being as black as a bull. At once the Prince of darkness replied to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of universes, why dost Thou wish to put something ahead of me in the creation?"¹⁰ The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the Prince of darkness: "Get thee hence from Me. If thou wilt not get thee hence from Me, I will rebuke thee—I desire to begin creating the world with light." "And after the light, what wilt Thou create?" God replied: "Darkness."¹¹ "And after the darkness, what wilt Thou create?" God replied: "Twins." "And why wilt Thou create Twins?" "Because Adam will be able to see both in daylight and in darkness, Gemini, [the sign for Sivan], standing for this ability in man." "And after that what

9. God's march away from Seir is understood as His futile attempt to give the Torah to Edom, after which He came to Israel (see Sif Deut. 343, and Piska 21.3). Thereupon the earth trembled because it feared that Israel might not take the Torah, and the heavens dropped tears in anticipation of its imminent departure from them. Cf. Piskas 5.9 and 25.3.

10. "the Prince of darkness replied . . . something ahead of me in the creation"—MSS and SPR. After the earth was created—so asserts one tradition—the abyss in the form of a bull-calf's foot sought to reach out. See Job 40:19, and 'Āruḡaṭ hab-bošem, 2, 242.

11. The whiteness of light is represented in the white Lamb, the zodiacal sign for Nisan; darkness in the black Ox or Bull, the sign for Iyar. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1, 12; 5, 16.

wilt Thou create?" "The Crab, [the sign for Tammuz]: Because like a crab man scrabbles together his possessions out of holes and cracks." <"And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Leo, [the sign for Ab]: After man in crab-fashion scrabbles together his possessions out of holes and cracks>, he presently thinks he is as strong as a lion." "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Virgo, [the sign for Elul]. For man is meant to rejoice in a virgin."¹² "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Libra, [Balances, the sign for Tishri], for man's deeds will be weighed in the balance." "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Scorpion, [the sign for Heshvan]. When a man is weighed and sins discovered in him, he is made to go down to Gehenna." "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "The bow [of the Archer, the sign for Kislev]. Perhaps you will say that once a man is plunged into Gehenna, there will be no coming up for him. When mercy is besought in his behalf, however, he is shot up from Gehenna as an arrow from the bow." "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Capricorn, [Male Kid, the sign for Tevet]. You might think that when a man comes up out of Gehenna, his face will be black [with the pain of suffering]. The truth is that as he comes up, he will romp like a kid." "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "The bucket [of the Waterbearer, the sign for Shevat], the bucket from which I splash pure water on a man to purify him of his sins." "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Pisces, [Fish, the sign for Adar]. Because Israel are exempt from the forces that rule the world, and the evil eye or planetary influence can no more prevail over them [than it can over the fish in water]: only the destiny attending the hour of an Israelite's birth can affect his life."¹³

12. Or, "to grow as plump as a virgin."—parallel in Bērešit Rabbati, p. 11; so, too, [Piska 52.2].

13. So P. See B.Ber 20a and Gen. Rabbah 97:2, where analogies are drawn between the children of Israel and fish in the sea.

FT, emending, reads: "or planetary influence, or destiny attending the hour of one's birth, can no more prevail," etc. One of the seven planets is said to "rule" or affect each of the hours in the day and in the night. See Pirke dē-Rabbi 'Eliezer, chap. 6, beginning.

"And why did the Holy One, blessed be He, in the beginning create the sun as the only source of light?"¹⁴ Because the world, all of it, was intended to be lighted by one luminary, the same by night as by day.¹⁵

"And after the creation of the sun," [the Prince of darkness asked], "what wilt Thou create?" "Mercury-and-Venus, [two-in-one]."¹⁶ But then, because the Holy One, blessed be He, foresaw that the generation of the flood would give itself to sexual license, He—just as soon as He foresaw that—made Mercury and Venus dwell apart from each other.¹⁷ Nevertheless, the generation of the flood rose up and confounded one sex with the other.

Mercury symbolizes the male principle and Venus the female principle. Now why did God feel that He had to create Mercury at all?¹⁸ Because Mercury—the symbol of malehood—represents Abraham our father who in wisdom gives guidance to all the world, every part of it.¹⁹

"And after that," [continued the Prince of darkness], "what wilt Thou create?" "The moon—for the children of Israel, every one of them, are destined to reflect the light of Abraham as the moon reflects the light of the sun."²⁰ "And after that what wilt Thou create?" "Saturn—for the nations of the earth will rule

MSS and SPR: "Because Israel will inherit the world, no evil eye, no planetary influence of a particular day, can prevail over them, only the destiny attending the hour of one's birth being capable of affecting them." See also B.Shab 156a, and Bērešit Rabbati, p. 11.

14. So MSS, SPR, and Bērešit Rabbati, p. 11. See also Epstein, MḲHY, p. 101.

FT: "And why did <not> the Holy One, blessed be He, create man first?"

15. See Piska 15.1.

16. A hermaphroditic planet representing man in his original androgynous state of male-and-female (see Gen. 1:27 and MTeh 139:5), which, like the single light of the sun, would have assured for the human race a single or common parenthood.

17. Mercury and Venus in separated state represent man and woman as separate creatures, one male and the other female. See Gen. 2:22 and MTeh 139:5.

18. The point of the question seems to be: Could not the race have continued by parthenogenesis? What need accordingly was there for the male principle?

19. So MSS; PE: "who like the sun illumines the entire world."

20. "And after that . . . the light of the sun"—MSS.

over them, over Israel.”²¹ “And after that what wilt Thou create?” “Jupiter”—for the Holy One, blessed be He, will deal strictly²² with the nations of the earth. And you may mistakenly think that the nations will be saved from the judgment. But the fact is that the Holy One, blessed be He, in creating Mars, [the Red Star], meant it to symbolize the red-hot fire of Gehenna into which they will fall.

When the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Torah to Israel, angels rejoiced, but the Holy One, blessed be He, was sad, as is said *When ye heard the voice out of thickest darkness* (Deut. 5:20).²³ But is it possible to say that the Holy One, blessed be He, dwelt in darkness? Has it not been long said *And the light dwelleth with Him* (Dan. 2:22)? The meaning of *darkness* is to be understood by the parable of a king of flesh-and-blood who gave his daughter in marriage to one of his nobles, and stipulated with him, saying: “You know that I am king, and my daughter a princess. You know that my daughter is delicate and sensitive—that she cannot bear even so much as a cool draft. Do not take her forth at night; do not provoke her in any way at all;²⁴ and above all do not occupy yourself with any wrongdoing which she hates.” The noble took upon himself all these stipulations, and the king turned his daughter over to the representatives of her family. But then, after they took her—the princess, that is—and set her down in the outer court, they saw the king’s son-in-law-to-be with a harlot who had come over to him and was sitting in his lap. Thereupon the representatives

21. The Hebrew *Šabbēṭay*, which represents Saturn and means Sabbath or rest, is apparently used as a euphemism for the slavery and unrest to be imposed on Israel. Then again *Šbty*, “Saturn,” may, by a play on words, be read as though it were spelled *Šbdy*, “enslaver” or “enslavement.”

22. Play on *Šedeḳ*, “Jupiter,” or “justice,” and its verbal form which means “deal strictly.”

23. FT’s and MC’s quoting of Deut. 5:8 is sustained by MSS. P quotes in corrupt form either Josh. 6:5 or 2 Sam. 15:10. Both FT and MC rearrange P slightly.

24. “Do not take her forth . . . in any way at all”—MSS and SPR; P (apparently) and FT: “Do not take her forth at night, unless a lamp is alongside of her, lest something fall on her garment.”

of the bride's family, each of them turning to the other,²⁵ said: "What can we do? If we lead her back, she will tell her father, and he will slay his son-in-law.²⁶ What shall we do? We shall let her slip away, [so that she will neither stay with her husband nor return to her father]." Thereupon they let her slip away.

Even so it was with the Holy One, blessed be He: When He gave Torah to Israel, all the hosts on high rejoiced, but the Holy One, blessed be He, cried and wept.²⁷ The angels said to Him right to His face: "Master of the universe, the joy Thou didst create in Thy world, is it not Thine?" He replied: "You know not the end of the matter, for My giving of Torah was attended by the stipulation on the very first Tables of the Commandments *Thou shalt have no other gods* (Exod. 20:3)." As God foresaw, when Moses and Joshua brought the Commandments, they beheld the golden calf and Israel bowing down to it. Thereupon they said: "What can we do? Shall we return with the Tables of the Torah to the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He? He will then surely destroy Israel. What shall we do? Let the Tables slip out of our hands even though they may be broken, [so that Torah will neither stay with Israel nor return to God]." And it was thus that they broke them, as is said *And Moses . . . broke them beneath the Mount* (Exod. 32:19).

3. [A parallel to God's *voice out of the thickest darkness* is the verse] *His lips are lilies, dropping with myrrh that passes away* (Song 5:13). One would have expected the phrase "with myrrh that stays," in view of the fact that as Solomon built his Temple the entire world became filled with fragrance of the spice of myrrh. Why then should Scripture say *with myrrh that passes away*?²⁸ Because God foresaw the end—that the Temple would

25. "turning to the other"—MSS.

26. "his son-in-law"—MSS and SPR; PE: "us."

27. "cried and wept"—Parma MS.

28. "of myrrh. Why then should Scripture say *with myrrh that passes away*?"—MSS and SPR.

be destroyed. Accordingly, Solomon wept as he said: This fragrance of the spice of myrrh will pass away. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Do not grieve, for I Myself shall rebuild it—a perfect structure. [Hence only in reference to a Temple built by mortals does Scripture speak of *myrrh that passes away* (Song 5:13). In reference, however, to the perfect Temple to be built by God, the Song of Songs says elsewhere of the spices used in the Temple that *The myrrh will be kept*²⁹ (Song 1:13). Thus the myrrh stands for the Temple that God will build, the Temple of which] the same verse goes on to say, *My Beloved will again lie betwixt my breasts* (*ibid.*).³⁰

By means of this exposition of the spice of myrrh that is in God's keeping we can understand the comparison in the verse *His tablets [in ten rows resemble rows] in a terrace garden of spices [of myrrh]*, etc. (Song 5:13).

4. Our Rabbis taught: *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2). At the time that Moses was to go up on high, a cloud came and lay down in front of him. Moses did not know whether he was to mount it or to take hold of it. Thereupon the mouth of the cloud flew open³¹ and he entered it, as is said *And Moses entered into the midst of the cloud* (Exod. 24:18)—*into the cloud which covered the Mount* (Exod. 24:15). And the cloud covered Moses and³² carried him up. As he was preparing to walk on the firmament, the angel Kemuel,³³ he that is in charge of the twelve thousand destroying angels that are seated at the gate

29. Reading *šeror*, "bag," as though vocalized *šarur*, "kept."

30. The bold figure of God's lying between Israel's breasts may be explained as follows: According to tradition, the Shekinah descended to an area of ten spans above the Ark, directly between the cherubim and the two staves attached to the Ark. Two ends of the staves pressed against the curtain of the Holy of Holies, so that to the people assembled on the other side of the curtain the points of the staves appeared like the protuberances of a woman's breasts. See 1 Kings 8:8, and Rashi, as well as Rashi on B. Shab 88b; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3, 159.

31. So MSS and SPR; PE: "Thereupon it flew open."

32. "covered Moses and"—MSS and SPR₁.

33. "Kemuel" is taken to represent *Ḳom ḳē-neḡeḏ 'ummaḡo šel 'El*—"he who rose up against God's people." See Friedmann's n. 40.

of the firmament, met him. He rebuked Moses and said to him: "What dost thou among the holy ones of the Most High? Thou comest from a place of all foulnesses: what wouldst thou in a place of purity? Born of a woman in heat, what wouldst thou³⁴ in a place of fire that is pure?" Moses replied: "I am Amram's son—I am he who has come to receive the Torah for Israel." When Kemuel still would not let him pass, Moses struck him one blow and made him perish out of the world. Then Moses walked about on the firmament as a man walks about on the earth, until he reached the place of Hadarniel, the angel who is sixty myriads of parasangs³⁵ taller than the next tallest one to him; with each and every word that comes out of his mouth there come with the word twelve thousand³⁶ fiery lightning flashes. Hadarniel accosted Moses and asked him: "What dost thou in the place of the holy ones of the Most High?" When Moses heard his voice, he grew exceedingly frightened, his eyes shed tears, and he all but fell from the cloud. In that instant the compassion of the Holy One, blessed be He, made itself heard, and a heavenly voice came forth and said to Hadarniel: Ye angels—know ye?—have always been quarrelsome beings. When I wished to create man, right to My face you became a corps of prosecutors, saying: *What is man that Thou art mindful of him?* (Ps. 8:5), and you did not let Me go ahead until I burned companies of you in the fire. Now again you rise in quarrelsomeness, and do not let Me give the Torah to Israel. But if Israel do not receive the Torah, there shall be no abiding place—neither for Me nor for you.

When Hadarniel heard this, he said directly to God: "It is manifest and clear to Thee that I did not know that Moses came hither with Thy permission. But now that I know it, I will act as messenger for him and go before him as a disciple goes before his master."

And so he walked before him until he reached the fire of

34. So P read correctly, as is clear from MSS.

35. A parasang is $3 \frac{2}{5}$ of a mile.

36. "twelve thousand"—so parallel in *Ma'yan ḥokmah*, in *Beṭ ham-Midraṣ*, 1, 58 and 5, 165; PE: "two."

Sandalphon. Then Hadarniel said to Moses: "Thus far I have permission to go. But from here, I have no permission to go on. In my way is Sandalphon's fire—O that it burn me not!"

When Moses saw Sandalphon, he grew exceedingly frightened, his eyes shed tears, and he all but fell from the cloud. Thereupon he implored God for mercy, and God answered him.

Come, behold how beloved Israel are to the Holy One, blessed be He, for at once the Holy One Himself, blessed be He, came down from His throne, and stationed Himself in front of Sandalphon until Moses passed by. Of that instant Scripture says, *And the Lord helped [Moses] pass before him*³⁷ (Exod. 34:6).

It is said of Sandalphon that he is taller than his fellows by a height that would take five hundred years to journey across, that he serves behind the chariot, and that he wreathes crowns for his Maker.³⁸ Can it possibly enter your mind that the ministering angels know where God is? Has it not been long said [by them] *Blessed be the glory of the Lord wherever His place be* (Ezek. 3:12)? The truth is that even ministering angels cannot see His abiding place. However, Sandalphon so adjoins the crown he has wreathed that it rises of its own accord and reposes on the head of his Master.

And when the crown reaches the head of the Lord of the universe,³⁹ all the hosts on high shake with awe, and the hitherto dumb creatures of the chariot roar like lions. In that instant all of them cry out and say, *Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts* (Isa. 6:3). When the crown reaches God's throne, the wheels of His throne revolve and the supports of the footstool tremble. The entire firmament and everyone in it is seized with a shudder of terror as the crown goes up above His throne; then all⁴⁰ the hosts above and His crown, too, open their mouths saying, *Praised be the glory of the Lord wherever His place be* (Ezek. 3:12).

37. JV: *And the Lord passed by before him.*

38. He wreathes them "out of the prayers of the righteous." See Tosafoṭ, s.v. "Binds crowns," on B.Ḥag. 13b.

39. "reaches the head of the Lord of the universe"—MSS and SPR.

40. "His throne; then all"—MSS and SPR.

Come and behold the excellence and greatness of the Holy One, blessed be He! When the crown reaches His head, He brings Himself to accept the crown from His servants. Then all the creatures of the chariot, as well as the seraphim, the 'ofannim, the wheels of the chariot, and the throne of glory say as one, *The Lord will reign for ever, Thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Hallelujah* (Ps. 146:10).

As Moses passed on, Rigyon,⁴¹ the river of fire whose coals consume angels and consume men,⁴² came against him. But the Holy One, blessed be He, took hold of Moses and led him past it.

Then Gallizur met him—[Gallizur, out of whose mouth comes to men word of the evil that has been decreed for them. God does not utter the decree Himself], *Out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth not evil, only good* (Lam. 3:38). Gallizur is also the one who discloses the mysterious ways of God.⁴³ His wings spread out to absorb the fiery breath of the creatures of the chariot, for if he did not absorb it, the ministering angels would be consumed by the fiery breath of the creatures of the chariot. The angel Gallizur is also the one who stands and proclaims: This year, wheat will bring good prices,⁴⁴ and wine will be cheap. He is also the angel who takes braziers on which are coals from Rigyon, and these braziers he holds up against angels and kings, so that in the braziers' reflected fires, fear of the angels and kings will strike the world. The Holy One, blessed be He, took Moses and led him past Gallizur.

Then a troop of angels of destruction, strong and mighty, who are set round about the throne of glory, met him. When Moses

41. Johanan Lewy suggests the reading *Riagion*, from the Greek *ryakion*, a possible folk diminutive of *ryax*, "flow of lava." See *Tarbiš*, 12 (1941), 167.

42. "Whence does Rigyon come forth? From the sweat of the creatures of the chariot. And whither does it pour out? . . . Upon the head of the wicked in Gehenna" (B.Ḥag 13b).

43. The name Gallizur is made up of *glh*, "reveal," and *šur*, "rock," or "the one in whom mysteries are bound or sealed up."

44. [Perhaps rather "the wheat crop will be abundant," and wheat, like wine, will also be cheap, and thus both food and drink will be available to all in abundance. L. N.]

reached them, they sought to burn him with the breath of their mouths. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He spread something of His own splendor about Moses, stood him up before His throne, and said: "Moses, make a reply to the ministering angels—speak up to them!" (The words *He causes [him] to take hold of the face of His throne and spreadeth His cloud upon him* [Job 26:9] prove, according to R. Nahum, that the Almighty spread about Moses something of the splendor of the presence of God, which is His cloud).⁴⁵ Moses said to Him: Master of the world, I fear that they will consume me with the breath of their mouths. God said: Take hold of the throne of My glory and turn them back with thy words. Thereupon Moses made bold and gave a reply to the ministering angels. He said: [You have no cause to burn me with the breath of your mouths in your wish to keep the Torah for yourselves]. In the Torah it is written [for the guidance of mortals] *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2). But you, [who live in the very presence of the one God]—how could you have many gods? In the Torah it is written *Thou shalt have no other gods* (Exod. 20:3). Have you divided minds? Have you two allegiances, [such as mortals are likely to have]? In the Torah it is written *Honor thy father and thy mother* (Exod. 20:12). Have you father or mother? In the Torah it is written *Thou shalt not covet* (Exod. 20:14). Have you covetousness? Thereupon the angels said: *O Lord our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth!*⁴⁶ (Ps. 8:10). Nay more: to Moses the angel of death made a gift of the secret of preserving life. As Scripture says, *Thou, [Moses], didst ascend on high, thou didst take the Torah into captivity, thou didst receive gifts as a mere man* (Ps. 68:19). Hence [in the plague which befell Israel in connection with Korah, Moses was able to stand off the angel of death]: *And*

45. The word *parfez*, "spread," a *hapax legomenon*, is understood as a portmanteau word, made up of *peraš*, "spread," *šaddai*, "Almighty," and *ziw*, "splendor." See B.Shab 88b.

46. See B.Shab 89a; MTeh 8:7; and Gen. Rabbah 8:6, where it is said that by these words the angels meant: "Do what pleaseth Thee. Thy glory is to sojourn with Thy people and with Thy children."

Moses said unto Aaron: "Take thy firepan, and put fire therein . . . and lay incense thereon" . . . And Aaron took it as Moses suggested . . . [The angel of death was thus] made to stand still between the dead and the living (Num. 17:11-13).⁴⁷ Had the angel of death not taught him the secret, how would Moses have known what was necessary to make death stand still?⁴⁸

When Moses finally arrived on high, the Holy One, blessed be He, opened the seven firmaments and showed him the Sanctuary on high, showed him also the four colors which He used for the Tabernacle, as is said *And thou shalt rear up the Tabernacle according to the fashion thereof which hath been shown thee in the Mount* (Exod. 26:30). Moses said to God: "Master of the universe, I do not know the earthly counterparts of these four colors." God said: "Turn to thy right." Thereupon he turned and saw a company of angels wearing garments the color of the sea. God asked: "What dost thou see?" Moses replied: "I see men wearing garments the color of the sea."⁴⁹ God said to him: "This is the hue of blue which I require in My Tabernacle." Then God said: "Turn to thy left." Moses turned and saw men wearing red garments. God asked: "What dost thou see?" Moses replied: "Men wearing red garments." God said: "This is the hue of purple I require." God said: "Turn back"⁵⁰ Moses turned back and saw a company wearing garments neither red nor green, [but a blend of the two]. God said: "I require this hue to be made from the scarlet worm." Moses turned frontwards and saw before him companies wearing white garments. "The hue I require is that of fine twined linen."⁵¹

Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, opened the portals

47. See Rashi.

48. See *Ma'yan hokmah* in *Beṣ ham-Midraṣ*, 1, 61, where it is stated that the secrets used in practical Cabala originated in heaven, that Moses transmitted them to Eleazar, and Eleazar to Phinehas who is Elijah.

49. "God asked . . . the color of the sea"—MSS.

50. "God said: 'Turn back'"—MSS and SPR.

51. See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem, 1953), pp. 225-26, on Exod. 25:4; and *The Holy Bible with . . . Commentary*, edited by F. C. Cook (New York, 1888), 1, 366-68, comments on Exod. 25:4.

of ⁵² the seven firmaments and appeared over them and over Israel ⁵³—eye to eye, in His beauty, in His glory, in the fullness of His stature,⁵⁴ with His crown, and upon His throne of glory. When Israel heard *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2), their souls at once departed from them. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, made descend the dew which at the resurrection will quicken the souls of the righteous, and revived them,⁵⁵ as is said *Thou, O God, didst send a bounteous rain, whereby Thou didst restore Thine inheritance when it fainted away* (Ps. 68:10).

How did the Holy One, blessed be He, revive them? For Israel's sake He made descend to the earth one hundred and twenty myriads of ministering angels, so that for each and everyone in Israel there were two ministering angels who took hold of him. One angel put his hand upon his heart that his soul should not leave him,⁵⁶ and one lifted up his neck so that he could look at the Holy One, blessed be He, face to face.

And why did God reveal Himself to them face to face? It is as though He said to them: Behold ye! I appeared before you in My glory and My majesty. Should there be a generation that will endeavor to lead you astray, saying, "Let us go and worship other gods," say to it: We have a God whom we worship. And when we do not worship Him, He sends us down to Gehenna.

And the Holy One, blessed be He, will again cause his sovereignty to be proclaimed over all of Israel.

52. "the portals of"—MSS and SPR.

53. "and over Israel"—MSS and SPR.

54. This does not represent "mere poetic figures of speech, but a consistent technical language developed by the Merkabah mystics." See Gershom G Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1960), pp. 62, 68, n. 12.

55. "Thereupon the Holy One . . . and revived them"—MSS and SPR.

56. "that his soul should not leave him"—MSS and SPR.

SUMMARY

I am the Lord, the First Commandment

The phrase *An instrument of ten strings* (Ps. 92:4) is first construed as referring to the harp which in the time-to-come will have as many as ten strings (Sec. 1), and then to the Ten Commandments which God had sought to have the children of Esau, of Ammon and Moab, and of Ishmael accept, but which they had rejected. Israel, however, accepted the Ten Commandments readily, together with the obloquy which goes with obedience to them—an obloquy which Israel bear with joy, or at any rate with no sense of duress (Sec. 2/3).

As God uttered the first words of the Ten Commandments, *I am the Lord thy God*, the earth was fearful lest violation of any of the 613 commandments implied in the Ten might lead to its being cursed as in the days of Adam. But God assured the earth that it would not again be cursed because of man. Or, according to another comment, the earth feared that Israel might not accept the Torah and that it would have to go back under water as it was at the beginning of creation (Sec. 4).

Michael and Gabriel at first thought that God would have them explain His words to Israel. But when He went on to say *I am the Lord thy God*, they said: In giving Israel the Torah, He is Himself explaining His commandments to Israel, His son (Sec. 5).

The words *I am the Lord thy God*, construed as meaning that God spoke to each and every individual in Israel, are considered in the light of *The Lord spoke with you face to face in the Mount* (Deut. 5:4). Explanatory analogies follow: (1) A thousand men look at a statue, and each and every one of them says, "It is looking at me"; (2) if God can hear the prayers of every creature at one and the same time, He is also able to look at each and every one in Israel; (3) a mighty warrior whirls his sword and makes it face in all directions one after the other; (4) a whirling lathe shows a facet no matter from what side it is viewed.

The phrase *face to face* is also read *face after face* and taken to refer (1) to God's many guises, for on different occasions He appeared as standing, as seated, as a young man, and as an old man; (2) to the threatening, severe, angry, joyous, laughing, or friendly face with which He appeared; (3) to the splendor of God's face bestowed upon Israel's face; (4) to facet after facet of meaning in the words of Torah; (5) to the fourfold revelation of Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, and Agadah; (6) to Israel's eagerness to learn—*face answereth to face* (Prov. 27:19); (7) to God's descent upon Mount Sinai; and (8) to God's direct confrontation of Israel (Sec. 6).

The words *I am the Lord thy God* are then considered in the light of Ps. 68, where it is stated that myriads of angels came down with God upon Sinai. According to one opinion, the myriads were the 22,000 angels who crowned the Tribe of Levi for remaining unmoved during the frenzy aroused by the golden calf. According to another opinion, the myriads were 22,000 chariots. In further comment, the myriads are construed as sixty myriads of angels with crowns to crown each man in Israel; or, according to another opinion, one hundred and twenty myriads, with a crown and a corselet of armor for each Israelite (Sec. 7). In further comment, the myriads of angels are construed as thousands multiplied endlessly by thousands, and myriads multiplied by myriads to an infinite number.

Other commentators maintain that the angels came down on the world sharply intent upon destroying it had Israel refused the Torah, an interpretation rejected in several comments which follow (Sec. 8). In further comment, the angels are said to have gone down to help God wage war for His children, help which He rejected (Sec. 9). The angels, being God's couriers, have His name engraved upon their hearts in the form of a quadrate seal.

The phrase *Sinai in holiness* (Ps. 68:18) is interpreted as meaning that at the time of the revelation Sinai was enfolded by holiness, and is also construed in the light of other verses as indicating that God is the dwelling place of the world, and all in it do His bidding (Sec. 10).

Because Israel had been away so long from God, God, accompanied by retinues of angels, identified Himself with the words, *I am the Lord thy God* (Sec. 11).

In further comment, the Hebrew word for "I" (*'nky*) is read as an acrostic containing a series of meanings. It is also read as the

Egyptian word for "I," as God's expression of His affection for Israel, and alternatively as a term intended to inspire fear and awe (Sec. 12). Furthermore, the word 'nky has always been a kind of password whereby Israel knew that their God was speaking to them (Sec. 13).

God termed Himself *thy God* as though in addressing Moses alone, He would not presently hold Israel responsible for their misdeeds (Sec. 14). As R. Simeon ben Yoḥai taught, the word 'nky carries a suggestion of comforting.

In saying *I am the Lord thy God*, God sought to plead with ten notorious individuals, each of whom would violate a different one of the Ten Commandments (Sec. 15).

At Sinai, God enticed Israel to accept the Ten Commandments; only subsequently did He spell out punishments imposed for violating them (Sec. 16).

Coveting another man's wife leads to transgression of all Ten Commandments; covetousness in general leads to violation of seven of the Ten Commandments (Sec. 17).

The second Five Commandments were intended to be paired off with the first Five Commandments (Sec. 18). The Ten Commandments were meant to be paired off with the ten words whereby the world was created (Sec. 19), and with the lessons taught by the ten plagues which God brought against the Egyptians in Egypt (Sec. 20).

Because the world was created with the letter *bet* in *br'syt*, God began the Ten Commandments with the letter 'alef in 'nky. The world was created with the *bet* to intimate that even as the *bet* is closed on three sides but open on the fourth side, so exposition of what is above the world and what is beneath it is closed off to man and only exposition of what is in it is open to him. So, too, whatever preceded the six days of creation is to be closed off and only what took place thereafter is open to exposition; the world was created with the *bet* to intimate also that it was God who created the world and that He meant it to be a blessing. But when the 'alef, resentful at being deposed, complained, God said that He would inaugurate the giving of the Torah with the 'alef of 'nky.

In comparison with the Torah whose giving took forty days, the worth of the world whose creation took only six days is relatively trivial. Indeed, but for the "I" which begins the Ten Commandments, the world would have dissolved and disappeared (Sec. 21).

The words *who brought thee out of the land of Egypt* (Exod. 20:2) are read as "who have been brought out with thee"—that is, God and Israel together went forth out of Egypt.

The ear of the Hebrew slave who refuses to accept his freedom is pierced through because his ear did not heed the words *I am the Lord thy God*, and got another master for itself (Sec. 22).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

*I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out
of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage
(Exod. 20:2).*

1. *With an instrument of ten strings, with the psaltery; with a solemn sound upon the harp* (Ps. 92:4). It is taught in the name of R. Judah: The harp of the present day has seven strings, as is said *With seven a day do I praise Thee* (Ps. 119:164). In the days of the Messiah, the strings will be eight: *For the leader; on the Sheminith*, "on the eight strings" (Ps. 12:1). And in the time-to-come, the strings will be ten, in keeping with *Give thanks unto the Lord with harp, sing praises unto Him with the psaltery of ten strings* (Ps. 33:2).¹

2/3. <In another comment the phrases *With an instrument of ten strings, with the psaltery* are read *For me the ten, for me the obloquy*.²> Hadrian—may his bones crumble to dust!³—contrived a problem for R. Joshua ben Ḥananiah, saying to him:

1. The words *Sing unto Him a new song*, which follow, are understood as an intimation of the time-to-come. "The harp and psaltery were both stringed instruments differing somewhat in form" (A. F. Kirkpatrick, *The Book of Psalms* [Cambridge, 1906], p. 166, comment on Ps. 33:2). For parallels to this passage see B.Ar 13b and MTeh 81:3.

2. Literally the word *šwr* means "that which is made up of ten." Hence "an instrument of ten [strings]," or, as here, "an instrument of Ten [Commandments]." The word *nbl* may be rendered either "psaltery" or "obloquy." Finally the word *ly* may mean "with," or by changing a vowel, "for me."

3. This imprecation generally follows Hadrian's name whenever it is mentioned in Rabbinic writings. The Jews detested Hadrian because they held him responsible for the great massacre which followed close upon Bar Koseba's last stand against the Romans at Bethar (135 C.E.).

The Holy One, blessed be He, bestowed a great privilege upon the nations of the world when He gave Five Commandments to Israel and offered five to the nations of the world.⁴ In the first Five Commandments, which the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Israel, His name is involved with the commandments, so that if Israel sin, God raises a cry against them; but in the second Five Commandments, which He offered to the nations of the earth,⁵ His name is not involved with the commandments, so that when the nations of the earth sin, He raises no cry against them.

R. Joshua replied: "Come and walk about the city's squares with me." And in each and every place where R. Joshua led him, Hadrian saw standing a statue of himself. R. Joshua asked: "This object—what is it?" The emperor replied: "It is a statue of me." "And this one here—what is it?" The emperor replied: "It is a statue of me." Finally R. Joshua drew him along⁶ and led him to a privy, where he said to him: "My lord king, I see that you are ruler everywhere in this city, but you are not ruler in this place." The emperor asked: "Why not?" R. Joshua replied: "Because in each and every place I saw standing a statue of you,⁷ but a statue of you is not standing in this place." Hadrian replied: "And you are a Sage among the Jews! Would such be the honor due to a king that a statue of him be set up in a place that is loathsome, in a place that is repulsive, in a place that is filthy?" R. Joshua replied: "Do not your ears hear what your mouth is saying? Would it redound to the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, to have His name mentioned with murderers, with adulterers, with thieves?" The emperor dismissed R. Joshua, who went hence. After the emperor went away, R. Joshua's pupils said to him: "Master, you thrust off that one with a broken reed of an answer!⁸ What answer will you give us?" R. Joshua replied: "The manner of giving Torah's Ten Commandments came into the mind of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the

4. "when He gave . . . to the nations of the world"—MSS.

5. See below in this Section, p. 417.

6. "And this one . . . a statue of me . . . drew him along"—MSS.

7. "but you are not ruler . . . saw standing a statue of you"—MSS.

8. "with a broken reed of an answer"—MSS.

following way, and in the following way were they given:⁹ At first God went to the children of Esau. He asked them: Will you accept the Torah? They said right to His face: Master of the universe, what is written in it? He said: *Thou shalt not kill*. They replied: But this goes against our grain. Our father led us to rely only on the sword, because he was told *By thy sword shalt thou live* (Gen. 27:40). We cannot accept the Torah.

He then went to the children of Ammon and Moab, and asked them: Will you accept the Torah? They said right to His face: Master of the universe, what is written in it? He said: *Thou shalt not commit adultery*. They replied: But our very origin is in adultery, for it is written *Thus were both the daughters of Lot with child by their father* (Gen. 19:36). We cannot accept the Torah.

Then He went to the children of Ishmael. He asked them: Will you accept the Torah? They said right to His face: Master of the universe, what is written in it? He said: *Thou shalt not steal*. They replied: It is our very nature to live only off that which is stolen, and that which is got by assault. Of our forbear Ishmael it is written *And he shall be a wild ass of a man: his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him* (Gen. 16:12). We cannot accept the Torah.

At length He came to Israel. They said: *We will do and hearken* (Exod. 24:7). Of God's several attempts to give the Torah it is written: *The Lord came unto Sinai; after having [first] risen at Seir unto the people thereof, then having shined forth at Mount Paran,¹⁰ He came unto the myriads holy, at His right hand a fiery law for them¹¹* (Deut. 33:2). In that instant Israel spoke right up to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master

9. "and in the following way were they given"—MSS.

10. Seir is a reference to Edom, and Paran to Ishmael. See Rashi.

11. IV: *The Lord came from Sinai, and rose from Seir unto them, He shined forth from Mount Paran, and He came from the myriads holy, at His right hand was a fiery law unto them*. Here the commentator attempts to solve the meaning of God's peregrinations; he is also baffled by the strange statement that God came from Sinai, whereas in truth He came to Sinai. Accordingly the commentator takes the preposition *mi* (usually rendered "from") as meaning rather "the place or region in or at which a thing is" (see Gesenius, *Lexicon*, p. 584. Cf. Gen. 12:8). The *myriads holy* are the myriads of Israel.

of the universe, *Make haste, my Beloved, and be Thou like a gazelle or a young hart upon the mountains of spices* (Song 8:14). *Make haste, my Beloved*—make haste from the fetor [of evil propensities which heathen nations inherited from their forbears], and come Thou swiftly like a gazelle to the fragrance [of the deeds which came to us from our ancestors]—*mountains of spices*.¹² *For me the ten* (Ps. 92:4): It is for us to accept all the precepts as well as the Ten Commandments. *For me the obloquy* (*ibid.*): It is for us to suffer obloquy during days of persecution because of the precepts and the Commandments.¹³ Resh Lakish said: We are to bear such obloquy with joy. And the Rabbis said: We are to bear such obloquy with no sense of duress.

As soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, saw Israel's resolution, saw that they wished to accept the Torah with love and affection, with fear and reverence, with awe and trembling, He said: *I am the Lord thy God*.

4. <Another comment: *I am the Lord thy God*, etc.> R. Levi taught in the name of R. Johanan: *Thou didst cause law to be heard from heaven; the earth feared, and was still* (Ps. 76:9). If *feared*, why *still*? And if *still*, why *feared*? The earth said in reply: Adam was given a single precept which he violated, and I was cursed because of him, as is written *Cursed is the ground because of thee* (Gen. 3:17). Now that there are two hundred forty-eight positive commandments and three hundred sixty-five negative commandments—how much more and more have I to fear! But, said R. Joshua of Siknin in the name of R. Levi, the Holy One, blessed be He, went back and reassured the earth, saying *O earth, earth, hear the word of the Lord* (Jer. 22:29). *Thou didst hear Me say, Cursed is the ground because of thee; in toil shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life* (Gen. 3:17); but didst thou not also hear Me say, *I will not again curse the*

12. That is, the Patriarchs. See Piska 3:3; and Song Rabbah.

13. Literally "because of it," that is the Torah. MSS: "because of Thee."

Unlike MSS which attribute what follows to Resh Lakish, PE attribute it to R. Simeon ben Levi.

ground anymore because of man (Jer. 8:21)? When the earth heard this, at once it was still.

<Another comment:> R. Hiyya bar R. Abba said in the name of R. Johanan: If the earth is said to have *feared*, why *still*? And if *still*, why *feared*? What the earth feared, however, is plain from what it said: "It may be that Israel will not accept the Torah, and I will have to go back under water as at the beginning of creation." As R. Huna¹⁴ taught in the name of R. Aḥa: *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof were about to be dissolved; but then the "I" [which begins the Ten Commandments, and hence stands for Israel's acceptance of God and the Torah], made the pillars of it stand firm*¹⁵ (Ps. 75:4). Otherwise the world might long ago have dissolved and disappeared. Had not Israel stood before Mount Sinai and said: *All that the Lord hath said we will do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7), the world might long since have reverted to chaos and desolation. And who made the world stand firm? *The "I" made the pillars of it stand firm.*

Another comment: R. Phinehas taught in the name of R. Johanan: If the earth is said to have *feared*, why *still*? And if *still*, why *feared*? The explanation of the earth's fear is in what the earth said: "It may be that the time of the resurrection of the dead has come and that the Holy One, blessed be He, requires of me what He has deposited with me, as is written *The earth also shall disclose her blood and shall no more cover her slain*" (Isa. 26:21). But then when she heard God say *I*, she grew still.¹⁶

14. "Huna"—MSS.

15. JV: *When the earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved, I Myself establish the pillars of it. Selah.*

16. "Whenever the Word is active in revelation, there are overtones and undertones of the other function of the Word, i.e. its cosmological function, [when God spoke the Word, and the world came into being]. But the world has, after all, already been created, cosmos has been formed out of chaos. What could be the . . . significance of the Word now? To let cosmos [on Judgment Day] revert to chaos? But, upon hearing God say *I*, the earth was reassured that . . . not the cosmological aspect of the Word [was] in operation at this moment but the *revelatory* aspect." (From a letter from Professor Jakob J. Petuchowski, January 12, 1966). See also Piska 20.1.

5. <When God will arise to judgment, to save all the humble of the earth for ever (Ps. 76:10).> R. Abbahu citing R. Johanan told¹⁷ the parable of a king who used to march out onto the parade ground with sword-bearers on one side of him and sword-bearers on the other side of him, with spearmen on one side and spearmen on the other side. And all used to say: If when marching onto the parade ground it is thus with him, how many more and more sword-bearers and spearmen will accompany him when he goes forth to war! If when the Holy One, blessed be He, caused His voice to be heard but once at Sinai, He made the entire earth tremble, how much more and more will the earth tremble when He rises to rebuke His world and to give the righteous their reward, as is written *When God will arise to judgment, to save all the humble of the earth for ever!*

R. Abbahu said further in the name of R. Johanan: Consider the analogy of a king who was giving rapid orders in a loud voice at the door of his palace.¹⁸ A general said: He is about to commission me to explain his orders. A military governor said: He is about to commission me to explain his orders. When they saw him take hold of his son's hand, they said: He intends to commit his orders, fully explained, directly to his son. So, too, with the Holy One, blessed be He. When He gave the commandments on Mount Sinai, at first He uttered them loudly all at once, as is said *And God spoke all these words [at once], saying* (Exod. 20:1). Thereupon Michael said: He is about to commission me to explain His words. And Gabriel said: He is about to commit them to me to explain. But as soon as He went on to say, *I am the Lord thy God*, they said: In giving His children the Torah, He is committing His commandments, fully explained, directly to Israel His son.¹⁹

6. <Another comment:> *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2). *The Lord spoke with you face to face in the Mount* (Deut. 5:4). R. Johanan said: A statue—a thousand men look at it, each and

17. "R. Abbahu . . . told"—MSS.

18. "As they saw him thus occupied" deleted, as in MSS.

19. So interpreted in ZA. R. Abbahu's parable thus has an anti-Gnostic or anti-Christian turn.

every one of whom says, "It is looking at me." Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, made each and every man in Israel feel that He was looking at him, saying, *I am the Lord thy God*.

R. Levi said: You may learn the same lesson from everyday experience, or, as we have just observed, you may learn it from a statue. Here is the way you may learn the same lesson from everyday experience: It is a fact that a single sound can penetrate ten ears at once. But can ten sounds penetrate one ear at once? Yes. God can hear the prayers of every creature at one and the same time—Scripture does not say "O Thou that hearest prayers," but says *O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee doth all flesh come* (Ps. 65:3). His power being such, how much more able is He to look at each and every one in Israel and say to him: *I am the Lord thy God!*²⁰

<In another comment, the verse is read *The Lord spoke with you face after face in the Mount* (Deut. 5:4).> R. Phinehas taught in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi:²¹ Consider the analogy of a mighty warrior who whirls his sword about and makes it face in all directions one after the other. Even so *The Lord spoke with you face after face*.

R. Jose bar Abun said: Like the whirling lathe which shows a facet no matter from what side it is viewed, even so *The Lord spoke with you face after face*.²²

<Another comment: *Face after face*.> R. Levi said: God faced them in many guises. To one He appeared standing, and to one seated;²³ to one as a young man, and to one as an old man. How so? At the time the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared on the Red Sea to wage war for His children and to requite the Egypt-

20. "R. Jose said: How much more is He able to look at each and every one in Israel and say to him: *I am the Lord thy God*!" deleted, as in MSS.

21. "R. Phinehas taught in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi"—Cas; PE: "R. Jose the son of R. Abin and R. Menahem taught in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi."

22. Parma MS and Cas add: "Resh Lakish said: Like a block of polished stone which shows a [brilliant] facet no matter from what side it is viewed, even so *The Lord spoke with you face after face*."

Cas adds further: "The Rabbis said: Like a house covered with mirrors which shows a reflection no matter from which side it is viewed, even so *The Lord spoke with you face after face*."

23. See Gen. 28:13 and Isa 6:1.

tians, He faced them as a young man, since war is waged best by a young man, as is said *The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is His name* (Exod. 15:3). And when the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared on Mount Sinai to give the Torah to Israel, He faced them as an old man, for Torah is at its best when it comes from the mouth of an old man. What is the proof? The verse *With aged men is wisdom, and understanding in length of days* (Job 12:12); and therefore Daniel said: *I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was Ancient of days did sit* (Dan. 7:9). In regard to God's guises, R. Hiyya bar Abba said: If a whoreson²⁴ should say to you, "They are two different gods," quote God as saying in reply: I am the One of the sea and I am the One of Sinai.

<Another comment:> R. Levi taught: At Sinai the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to them with many faces, with a threatening face, with a severe face, with an angry face, with a joyous face, with a laughing face, and with a friendly face. How so? When He showed them the punishment of the wicked, He showed it to them with a threatening face, with a severe face, with an angry face. And when He showed them the reward of the righteous in the time-to-come, He showed it to them with a joyous face, with a laughing face, with a friendly face. In regard to God's many faces, R. Hiyya bar Abba taught: Should a whoreson²⁴ say to you, "They are two different gods," reply to him, Scripture does not say "The gods have spoken . . . face after face" but *The Lord has spoken with you face after face*.

<In another comment, the verse *The Lord spoke with you face after face* is read *The splendor of the Divine Face came into [thy] face*.> R. Zakkai of Shaab taught in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman: At the time Israel stood at Mount Sinai and said *We will do [what we have been commanded], and eagerly hearken [to what we shall be told]* (Exod. 24:7)²⁵—at that time splendor from the splendor of the Presence above was bestowed upon them. And the proof? The verse *Thy renown went*

24. Or "son of heresy," i.e. a heathen or a renegade Israelite.

25. In Rabbinic tradition, Exod. 24 is construed as describing events which had taken place on the fourth and fifth days of Sivan, before the revelation on the sixth day. See Rashi.

forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect, through My splendor which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God (Ezek. 16:14).²⁶

In another comment, the words *face after face*, etc., are understood as "facet after facet." R. Tanḥum bar Ḥanilai said: Had the Torah been given in the form of clear-cut decisions, no teacher would have a leg to stand on in the expression of his opinion; as it is, when he pronounces an object unclean, there are others like him who pronounce it unclean, and when he pronounces it clean, there are others like him who pronounce it clean.²⁷ For, as Rabbi Yannai said, the Torah which the Holy One, blessed be He, gave to Moses was given to him with forty-nine arguments by which a thing may be proved clean, and forty-nine other arguments by which a thing may be proved unclean. This number corresponds to the numerical value of *wdglw*²⁸ in the words *Because His banner (wdglw)*—Torah—[*is variegated*], *love [for it] is within me* (Song 2:4).²⁹ [Because of such variegation in Torah], Moses asked: How shall I go about deciding questions? God replied: When those who pronounce a thing unclean are in the majority, pronounce it unclean; when those who pronounce it clean are in the majority, pronounce it clean.

R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Johanan: R. 'Aḳiḇa had a faithful disciple who knew how to expound Scripture with forty-nine reasons drawn from another text, apparently not relevant to the first, to prove a thing clean.³⁰ This disciple, it is said, was a chip from Mount Sinai.³¹

26. In Rabbinic commentary, Ezek. 16 is construed as describing events in the redemption from Egypt and the revelation at Sinai. See Piska 33.10.

27. [Perhaps rather "similar objects are accordingly pronounced unclean . . . similar objects are pronounced clean"; i.e. the Torah's variegation makes it possible to recognize the teacher's authority and use it as a basis for decision in analogous cases. L. N.]

28. $w = 6, d = 4, g = 3, l = 30, w = 6$.

29. JV: *His banner over me is love*.

30. [Or: "who knew how to expound Scripture in such a way as to declare an (unclean) thing clean for 49 reasons drawn from another text (than the one which designates it as unclean)." L. N.]

31. That is, an able exponent of the variegation of Torah. An alternative interpretation, in an uncomplimentary sense, is: "This disciple was cut off from

<In another comment,> R. Hanina bar Papa, interpreting the words *face after face* literally, takes them to mean "faces and faces." <For the word *panim*, "face," having only a plural form, implies at least two faces, and the repetition of the word implies at least two more faces. You thus have four faces:> an earnest face at the revelation of Scripture, an equanimous³² face at the revelation of Mishnah, a friendly face at the revelation of Talmud, and a joyous³³ face at the revelation of Agadah.

<In another comment the words previously read *Face after face* are read *Face to face*, etc.> R. Menaḥeman taught in the name of R. Jacob ben Tardai: *As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man* (Prov. 27:19). Whereas among men it may be that the master wishes to teach but the disciple does not wish to learn, or the disciple wishes to learn but the master does not wish to teach, here at Sinai the Master wished to teach and the disciple wished to learn.

<Another comment: *Face to face*.> R. Joshua ben Levi took the phrase to mean that one face was opposite the other face and hence suggests one of two things: either that the One on high descended to face the one below, or that the one below lifted himself up to face the One on high. However, said R. Joshua ben Levi, since it is written *And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai* (Exod. 19:20), we know that the One on high had Himself come down below. Now you find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, gives anything to a righteous man, He never

Mount Sinai"—that is, "he had not stood at Mount Sinai, because he was over-subtle."

32. Because the study of Mishnah involved no more than the recitation of familiar passages.

33. In his note Friedmann suggests that the reading be "a joyous face at the revelation of Talmud and a friendly face at the revelation of Agadah." He cites B. Shab 30b to prove that the mood of joy was needed to grasp the complexities of Talmud. [The order of the adjectives defining the faces varies in parallel passages, as quoted by Friedmann. It would seem that a descending scale of veneration is intended: an earnest (literally "awed") face for the awesome text of Scripture; an equanimous (i.e. moderately reverent) face for the Mishnah, the creation of the Tannaim, the direct successors of the Prophets; a joyous face for the skillful interpretations of the Gemara; and a friendly (or indulgent) face for the imaginative flights of the Agadah. L. N.]

takes it away, so that it even goes down into the grave with him.³⁴ Therefore R. Simeon ben Yoḥai said: If an opening were to be made in the grave of Moses, the entire world could not endure the light. And if true of the opening, lo, how much more true of the grave! And if true of the grave, lo, how much more true of Moses!

<Another comment: *Face to face*, etc.> R. Berechiah taught: Moses said to Israel: My children, when you were in the land of Egypt, I used to say to you *The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you*. And you asked me *What is His name?* and for the time being I replied: His name is *I am that I am* (Exod. 3:13-14). But now, here is that which is to be bought, and here is the purveyor; here the wares, and here the merchant—face to face. Now you hear Him directly: *I am the Lord thy God*.³⁵

7. <Another comment on> *I am the Lord thy God*, etc.³⁶ *The chariots of God: two myriads, thousands of angels; the Lord is among them: It is Sinai in holiness* (Ps. 68:18). R. Abdimi of Haifa said: In the study of a Mishnah which is in my possession I learned that twenty-two thousand ministering angels came down with the Holy One, blessed be He, on Mount Sinai; and in the hand of each and every one was a crown to crown therewith each and every man in the Tribe of Levi. For, as R. Levi explained, it was known and revealed to Him who spoke and the world came into being, that [during the frenzy aroused by the golden calf] most of the Tribes would not keep control of themselves. Only the Tribe of Levi would remain unmoved,³⁷ and

34. See B.Ta 25a, and MTeh 92:8.

35. See Rashi on Deut. 5:24.

36. The problem for the commentator is that in Exodus God speaks of Himself as being alone at the time of the revelation on Sinai; whereas the verse in the Psalm which also describes the revelation on Sinai bears witness to the presence of thousands of angels. What was the purpose of their presence?

37. So apparently Parma MS which reads *bememehem*, "in their waters," and *bememaw*, "in its waters," literally "stand still or unmoved in their waters." The verse in the Psalm would accordingly be read *The chariots of God: two myriads, thousands of angels*, and read also *God's [coronal] mountings for the 22,000 who would remain calm* (see Num. 3:39). In the latter reading the word *rkḇ*

therefore the angels came down with the Holy One, blessed be He, on Mount Sinai, and in the hand of each and every one was a crown to crown therewith each and every man of the Tribe of Levi.

R. Yannai the son of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai³⁸ said to him: If it is meant that only twenty-two thousand angels accompanied God, then you make out His retinue to be a small thing. The verse is therefore to be understood that when the Holy One, blessed be He, came down on Mount Sinai there came down with Him twenty-two thousand chariots, and every chariot was like the chariot which Ezekiel saw.³⁹

<In another comment, the verse is read *The chariot of God—myriads*, etc.> R. Johanan said: On the day the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared on Mount Sinai to give the Torah to Israel, there came down with Him sixty myriads of angels, and in the hand of every one of them was a crown to crown therewith each man in Israel.⁴⁰

is taken in the sense of "to place upon, to lay upon" (2 Kings 13:16); and, by metathesis, *šn'n*, previously rendered "angels," is read *š'nn*, "calm, unruffled." Cf. *But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell securely, and shall be quiet (š'nn) without fear of evil* (Prov. 1:33).

By the crown wherewith each of the Tribe of Levi was crowned, the gift of life may have been meant, for, among the Tribes of Israel, they alone survived the wilderness. See MTeh 1:14.

PE: "that [in the frenzy aroused by the golden calf] most of the Tribes would not abide in rectitude by their oath, but that the Tribe of Levi would stand by its rectitude."

In the comments of R. Abdimi and R. Levi, and in the comments of R. Johanan which follow, the angels are present not to share in the revelation but to bestow distinctions upon the Tribe of Levi or upon the entire people of Israel.

38. So Parma MS; PE: "ben Yannai."

39. Meaning apparently that alongside the Written and Oral Law, mystic teachings of great profundity were vouchsafed to the people of Israel. Such a tradition would, of course, be associated with a son of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, who was a profound student of mystic lore.

40. In this comment, the verse in the Psalm is apparently read *God's [coronal] mountings for the ten thousands who said: We will do and then hearken*. In such reading of the verse the *hapax legomenon šn'n* is taken as an acrostic for the words *š'mrw n'šh wnyšm'*, "who said: We will do, and then hearken" (Exod. 24:7). Such implicit obedience won crowns for each of the "ten thousands" of the people of Israel (see B.Shab 88a, and MTeh 103:8). The phrase "ten thousands," which occurs also in Num. 10:36, is taken to mean "tens [of] thousands," that is the 600,000 Hebrews who were at Sinai.

R. Abba bar Kahana said in the name of R. Johanan: One hundred and twenty myriads of angels!⁴¹ As one set a crown upon each Israelite, another girded him with a corselet of armor.

R. Huna Rabbah of Sepphoris said: [Not with corselets of armor, but] with girdles of magistracy, as in the verse *He looseth the bond of kings, and bindeth their loins with a girdle* (Job 12:18).⁴²

8. <In another comment, the verse is read *The chariots of God are myriads*, etc.> Rabbi taught in the name of Abba ben Joseph: One verse says, *Is there any number of His armies?* (Job 25:3), while another verse says, *The chariots of God are myriads, even thousands upon thousands*. What is meant by these two verses is that each of His armies is made up of a definite number, but that His armies are innumerable.

The Rabbis taught differently: One verse says, *Is there any number of His armies?* While another verse says, *Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him* (Dan. 7:10). What is meant by these two verses is that the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He, was of infinite perfection before the Temple was destroyed. After the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed be He, reduced—if one dare say such a thing—His retinue. Why? Because, as He said, My House is destroyed—how then can praise of Me be infinitely perfect?

<Another comment: *The chariots of God*, etc.> R. Tanhum ben Hanilai taught: That is, thousands multiplied endlessly by thousands, and myriads multiplied by myriads, to a number which no mathematician can calculate.⁴³

R. Azariah and R. Judah the son of R. Simon taught in the

41. Since the word *rbtym*, "myriads," in the Psalm is a dual form, R. Abba bar Kahana understands it as an intimation that the angels who came down on Sinai were twice the number of the children of Israel.

42. Cf. Piskas 10.6 and 33.9; and MTeh 103:8.

43. So emended by Jacob Levy in his *Wörterbuch*, 2, 319. He takes *šn'n* to be a nominal form of *šnh*, "repeat"—hence "repetition." Levy's emendation is sustained by MSS.

name of R. Joshua ben Levi: The word *myriads* implies that the angels are innumerable, and the word *thousands* also implies that they are innumerable.⁴⁴

[Differing from those who taught that the angels came down to put crowns upon the heads of each and every one in Israel], the Rabbis maintained: The angels came down on the world sharply intent⁴⁵ upon destroying it.

But R. Azariah said: Could such conceivably accompany the King in whose presence is peace?⁴⁶ [Hence these angels must have come down with benevolent intent; and the word *šine'an*, taken by the Rabbis to mean "sharply intent on destruction," is to be understood in any one of the meanings which follow]. Thus it was found written in a text⁴⁷ brought out of the Diaspora: Two myriads of angels of the kind known as '*alfe šine'an*'⁴⁸ came down with the Holy One, blessed be He, on Mount Sinai to give the Torah to Israel. Or, according to R. Eleazar, the word is to be read *šenna'in*, "these angels were the most beautiful and most excellent." Or, according to R. Jose the son of R. Halafta, these angels were the princely counterparts in heaven of the nations of the earth.⁴⁹ And why did they come down? For the honor of the Torah, said R. Hiyya bar Abba. For the glory of Israel,⁵⁰ said R. Hiyya bar Jose. R. Eleazar noted: Wherever you find crowds of people, you find the discomfort of pressure, but here the word *šn'n* means that they were comfortable (*šnn*).

44. He apparently reads *šn'n* as *š'ynn*, "which are not [to be numbered]."

45. Play on the words *šine'an*, "angels, sharp-visaged ones," and *šēnunim*, "sharply intent." The angels would have destroyed the world had Israel refused the Torah. See MTeh 75:1, and Piska 21:3.

46. So David Luria. See Sefer 'Eliyahu Rabba, chap. 17 (ed. Friedmann, p. 88). In another but somewhat irrelevant reading of this comment, R. Azariah is taken to say: "It was angels such as these that king Solomon [dreaded]." That is, after Solomon, rejecting the law, had sinned, he was afraid of evil spirits. See Num. Rabbah 11:3, Song Rabbah on 3:6.

47. Reading with David Luria, *mskt*, "text," instead of *msrt*, "tradition."

48. JV: *thousands of angels* (Ps. 68:18).

49. He probably reads '*alfe šine'an* as though written '*alfe šēnu'in*, "heads of those who are hated." See MTeh 9:14.

50. Either out of genuine deference for the Torah, or out of deference for a people which seemed to be having its day in the sun.

R. Eleazar ben Azariah and R. Eliezer the Modiite were engaged in interpreting the verse *The chariots of God are myriads, yea thousands* (Ps. 68:18), and R. Eleazar ben Azariah asked R. Eliezer the Modiite: But could Mount Sinai hold them all? His colleague replied: It is written *At that time they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord; and all the nations shall be gathered unto it* (Jer. 3:17). Is it possible to say that Jerusalem will be able to hold so many? Never fear—the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to Jerusalem: Extend thyself, enlarge thyself, receive thy hosts.⁵¹ Even so He said to Sinai: Extend thyself, enlarge thyself, receive My angelic hosts.

<Another comment: *The chariots of God are myriads, yea, thousands of angelic hosts.*> R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Abba bar Kahana: It is written *Therefore thus saith the Lord, the God (Elohim) is hosts, the Lord* (Amos 5:16)—the name which we give to the Holy One, blessed be He, thus intimates that the hosts⁵² are His hosts [of divine powers]. R. Judah bar Simon said: Indeed for such intimation not all of His name is required. Even a single letter of His name⁵³ stands for a host [of divine powers, as numerous as the ones attributed] to His entire name.

Our Masters taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: *I am the Lord, which is also My name* (Isa. 42:8). Even as I create worlds and destroy worlds, so My name creates and destroys worlds.

51. Cf. Piska 1.3.

52. David Luria: "The name of the Holy One, blessed be He, makes up His hosts." He takes the passage to mean that nothing about God is physical, and so there was no need for Sinai to become enlarged.

53. An aspect of His being.

Another possible rendition: "The name [*šb'wt*] of the Holy One, blessed be He, intimates the number of angelic hosts"—499,000 ($\$ = 90$, $b = 2$, $' = 1$, $w = 6$, $t = 400$). The reference would thus be to the number of angels saying daily "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts." See Sefer 'Eliyahu Rabba, ed. Friedmann, p. 34, n. 22, wherein it is suggested that the number "496,000" in Lev. Rabbah 2:8 be emended to read "499,000." R. Judah bar Simon would then say that such a number sing daily before every aspect of God's being.

Both R. Abba bar Kahana and R. Judah bar Simon thus construe the passage as giving the number of the myriads and thousands of angels who, according to Ps. 68:18, came down with God on Sinai.

9. R. Yudan said: Consider the parable of a king whose son was captured, and the king, clothed in vengeance, went forth to deliver him. Neighbors as well as kinsmen of his came forward to help him, some with swords and some with spears. He said to them: Go hence, I have no need of you. So, too, when the Holy One, blessed be He, appeared to wage war for His children and to requite⁵⁴ the Egyptians, the ministering angels came to help Him, some with hailstones and some with coals of fire. He said to them: Go hence, I have no need of you. Scripture does not say, "*At the brightness that was before Him* (Ps. 18:13), his thick clouds carried," etc. but says, [*At the brightness that was before Him*], *His thick clouds passed on, [as did the] hailstones and coals of fire (ibid.)*.

R. Judah II the Patriarch said: It is the way of the world that when a mortal king goes to a May festival he goes with some ten men, but when he goes to war he goes forth with companies and with legions. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not act thus. When He revealed Himself at the Red Sea to wage war for His sons, He appeared to them by Himself, *The Lord is a man of war* (Exod. 15:3); but when He came down on Mount Sinai to give Torah to Israel, Michael and his retinue came down with Him, Gabriel and his retinue: *And the Lord my God shall come, and all His holy ones with Him* (Zech. 14:5).⁵⁵

10. *The Lord is among them* (Ps. 68:18). According to R. Phinehas who cited R. Joshua ben Levi, the verse implies His Lordship⁵⁶ is upon the angels: hence Michael trembles under His dominion, Gabriel trembles under His dominion. Furthermore, R. Phinehas went on to say in the name of R. Levi, the names Michael and Gabriel indicate that the name of the Lord ('*el*') is joined to the names of the angels. Indeed, as R. Levi said,

54. "the nations" deleted, as in MSS.

55. So Targum Jonathan; MT: *and all the holy ones with Thee*.

56. In the Hebrew Bible, the spelling of God's name derived from '*adon*', "lord, master," stresses His universal sovereignty; whereas the tetragrammaton YHWH stresses God's eternity.

the angels being His couriers, His name is engraved upon their hearts in the form of a quadrate seal.⁵⁷

A further comment on the words *Sinai in holiness* (Ps. 68:18): From these words taken by themselves we could not tell whether Sinai was enfolded by holiness, or whether holiness was enfolded by Sinai. But since the verse in its entirety reads *The Lord is among the angels [in holiness, so too] on Sinai in holiness*, we know that like the angels Sinai was enfolded by holiness.

R. Huna said in the name of R. Ammi: Why is the epithet "Place" substituted for the name of the Holy One, blessed be He? Because He is the place of His world. Offhand, we cannot say whether God is the place of the world or whether His world is His place. However, from the verse *And the Lord said: "Behold, there is a place by Me"* (Exod. 33:21), we may infer that God is the place of the world, and that His world is not His place.⁵⁸

R. Isaac taught: Scripture says, *The skies, the dwelling place of the eternal God* (Deut. 33:27). Offhand, we cannot say whether God is the dwelling place of the world, or whether His world is His dwelling place. But since we find it said *Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place . . . from everlasting* (Ps. 90:1), we know that God is the dwelling place of the world and that His world is not His dwelling place.

R. Yudan said: He is like a warrior riding upon a horse, with the reins looping down on one side and the other; the horse does the bidding of the rider, but the rider does not do the bidding of the horse. Thus Scripture says, *When Thou ridest upon Thy horses, it is Thine acts of riding which give deliverance* (Hab. 3:8).⁵⁹

57. "in the form of a quadrate seal"—Parma MS.

58. "That is to say, God is everywhere in the corporeal world, thereby exercising His individual providence, but He is no part of the corporeal world and is unlike anything in it." Harry A. Wolfson, *Philo* (Cambridge, 1947), 1, 247. This Palestinian Jewish use of "Place" has been taken to have either a Philonic or a Persian origin, but it is undoubtedly of native Jewish origin. See A. Mar-morstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* (London, 1927), 2, 92-93.

59. Apparently R. Yudan reads Ps. 68:18 as *The riding of God upon myriads, yea thousands of angelic [hosts]*, and thus links the verse in the Psalm with

11. R. Phinehas said in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi: Consider the parable of a king who leaving his wife pregnant went away to a far country by the sea where he tarried many years. The queen gave birth to a son and brought him up. When the king returned from the far country by the sea, she took his son to the reception for the king his father. When the son saw a general, he stared at him; when he saw a governor of a province, he stared at him, saying each time "This is he, this is he!" The king, observing him, said: "My boy, why do you look at such as these? You will have no benefit from them. You are *my son*, and I am your father."

Even so, when the Holy One, blessed be He, came down on Mount Sinai, Michael⁶⁰ and his retinue, Gabriel⁶¹ and his retinue, came down. And Israel, staring at each one of them, kept saying "This is He, this is He!" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: "My children, why are you looking at such as these? You will have no benefit from them. You are *My children*, and I am your Father." You are My children, as is said *Ye are the children of the Lord your God* (Deut. 14:1); and I am your Father, as is said *I am become a Father to Israel* (Jer. 31:9). You are My people—*And ye shall be My people*⁶² (Ezek. 36:28)—and I am your God—*And I will be your God* (*ibid.*)⁶³.

12. *I ('nky) am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2). The word '*nky*, according to Rab, is an acrostic which is to be read "I the Scribe⁶⁴ wrote and gave [the Torah]." ⁶⁵

the verse in Habakkuk. JV: *That Thou dost ride upon Thy horses, upon Thy chariots of victory*. The three analogies wherein God is compared to a place, a dwelling, and a warrior upon a horse might therefore be understood as saying that God contains the world, cares about it, and controls everything that happens in it.

60. Michael, the Prince of Israel.

61. Gabriel, "God is my strength," is a name linked with revelation.

62. "*And ye shall be My people*"—MSS.

63. "*And I will be your God*"—MSS.

64. "the Scribe"—Parma MS; PE: "Myself."

65. Each of the letters of the word '*nky*, a form of the word less usual than '*ny*, is taken in the following comments as the initial letter and abbreviation of

According to R. Yudan the son of R. Simon, the word 'nky is to be read as an acrostic meaning "I gave and wrote the Ten Commandments."⁶⁶

R. Berechiah took the word as an acrostic to be read "I will be thy light, thy crown, thy grace,"⁶⁷ if you accept the Ten Commandments."

In the word 'nky, the letter 'alef ("one") refers to the Holy One, blessed be He: *Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is One* (Deut. 6:4); the letter nun, whose numerical value is fifty, and the letter kaf, whose numerical value is twenty, together refer to the seventy original peoples whom the Holy One, blessed be He, created in His world; and the letter yod, whose numerical value is ten, refers to the ten <generations> out of all of which He chose only Israel.⁶⁸

In the word 'nky, the letter 'alef ("one") represents our father Abraham: *Abraham was one* (Ezek. 33:24); the letter nun, whose numerical value is fifty, signifies that Abraham was fifty years old when he recognized his Maker. According to both R. Hanina and R. Johanan, it was at the age of forty-eight⁶⁹ that

a word that the letter stands for. Thus in the first comment the 'alef is taken to represent 'ny, "I"; the nun, *numykh*, "Scribe"; the kaf, *ktyt*, "I wrote"; the yod, *yhyt*, "I gave."

66. In this interpretation, the 'alef is taken to represent 'n, "I"; the nun, *ntty*, "I gave"; the kaf, *ktyt*, "I wrote"; the yod, the number "ten," the numerical value of the letter.

Concerning the controversy between Rab and R. Yudan the son of R. Simon, cf. Lieberman, *H/P*, pp. 80-82.

67. SPR₁ changes *ywnty*, "my dove," to *y'wtk*, "thy grace."

68. From Noah to Abraham there were ten generations; Abraham was also spoken of as Israel (see Gen. Rabbah 63:3); and Abraham was the first to practice the Torah.

69. At the time the Tower of Babel was built, Abraham was 48 years old. Abraham walked by the builders and spurned them, saying, *Destroy, O Lord, and divide their tongue* (Ps. 55:10. See MhG Gen. 11:3). Thus an extraordinary experience led Abraham to proclaim his Maker. The tradition that he was 50 years old when he recognized his Maker is in keeping with the statement that "50 is for counsel" (Ab 5:24). The tradition that he was three years old when he recognized God holds him to be a religious prodigy. Each of the three traditions thus explains why in Gen. 12:1 the Lord summoned Abraham to go to the Land which He would show him. See also Piska 42.3, n. 14.

Abraham recognized his Creator. According to Resh Lakish, he was three years old, as intimated in the verse *For the time that* ('kb) *Abraham hearkened to My voice*, etc. (Gen. 26:5), a number derived by subtracting 172, the numerical value of the letters in the word 'kb,⁷⁰ from 175, which was the number of years he lived. The letter kaf, whose numerical value is twenty, signifies that he inaugurated circumcision in the twentieth generation since the creation of Adam.⁷¹ The letter yod, whose numerical value is ten, refers to the ten trials whereby Abraham was tested, and in all of which he was found steadfast.⁷²

In the word 'nky, the letter 'alef ("one") refers to Israel, to whom God said *My dove, My undefiled, is but one* (Song 6:9), and concerning whom David asked *Who is like Thy people, like Israel, a nation one in the earth?* (2 Sam. 7:23); the nun, whose numerical value is fifty, stands for the fifty days between Passover and the Feast of Weeks; the kaf, whose numerical value is twenty, has reference to the twenty plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought upon the Egyptians,⁷³ ten in Egypt and ten upon the sea; and the yod, whose numerical value is ten, refers to the Ten Commandments.

The word 'nky, according to R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, is to be read 'nk, "if thou so wishest," that is, if thou retainest thy water-clear integrity,⁷⁴ then shall I be the Lord thy God.

70. The letter 'ayin = 70, kaf = 100, and bet = 2, hence 172. Scripture is thus understood as bearing witness concerning Abraham that from the time he was three years old he hearkened to the voice of God.

71. There were ten generations from Adam to Noah, and ten from Noah to Abraham.

72. See MTeh 18:25.

73. "has reference to . . . to the Egyptians"—MSS.

74. "thy water-clear integrity"—MSS and SPR; P: "its water-clear integrity." For the meaning of the phrase, see MTeh 68:10, and *Beṭ ham-Midrāṣ*, 5, 73; and Saul Lieberman, in *Studies of the Research Institute for Hebrew Poetry in Jerusalem*, 6, (1945), 227. Yishak Vartski suggests the following rendition: "If thou wilt not hold on to what is given thee, I shall [make thee watertight] through a glaze [of suffering]." Vartski thus invokes the image of a hole in the side of a pot made watertight again by glazing the pot. See *Sinai*, 41, (5717/1957), 223-26.

For the Cabalistic interpretation of "if thou stayest within the limits possible for man," see G. Scholem, *Rešit haḳ-Kabbalah* (Jerusalem, 5708/1948), p. 219.

R. Judah and R. Nehemiah differed. According to R. Judah, in this particular context the term *'nky* is a way of expressing love, a way of expressing affection. Consider the analogy of a king who sent his son away to a far country by the sea where he learned the language of the people by the sea, and when he returned from the far country by the sea, the king began to talk to his son in the language the son had learned. Even so when Israel were in the land of Egypt, they learned the Egyptian speech; and when they came before Mount Sinai, the Holy One, blessed be He, began His speaking to them with the word *'nky*, which is *'nwḳ* in Egyptian.⁷⁵

R. Nehemiah said: In this particular context *'nky* is a term intended to inspire fear, a term intended to inspire awe.⁷⁶

13. A parable of a man who bore the title of the king's friend⁷⁷ and who knew the king's secrets. In the course of time, when the king's friend was about to die, he said: "My son, come, and I shall reveal to you the secrets of the king." Then he lifted his eyes and beheld the king. Thereupon he said: "My son, heed the honor of the king." Even so, *Jacob called unto his sons, and said: "Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the end of days"* (Gen. 49:1). Then Jacob lifted his eyes and beheld the Holy One, blessed be He. Thereupon he said: "My children, heed the honor of the Holy One, blessed be He." What did they say in God's honor? *Hear, O [father] Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One* (Deut. 6:4). Jacob then went on to say: My children, I give you this sign. With the word *'nky* God spoke to my grandfather: *I ('nky) am thy shield* (Gen. 15:1). With the term *'nky*, He spoke to my father: *I ('nky) am the God of Abraham thy father* (Gen. 26:24). And with the term *'nky* He spoke to me: *I ('nky) am the*

75. Actually Coptic, which is descended from ancient Egyptian. See A. Sh. Yahuda, "Millim, muššagim, u-minhaḡim," in *Sefer haš-Šanah*, ed. by Histadruth Ivrit of America (New York, 5709/1949); and Gesenius, *Lexicon*, s.v. *'nky*.

76. In MhG Exod., p. 401, R. Nehemiah cites the verse *For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God* (Exod. 20:5) as his proof text.

77. A court title, as was "companion of the king." Cf. Polybius, 31.3.7.

God of Beth-el (Gen. 31:13); *I ('nky) will go down with thee into Egypt* (Gen. 46:4). And thus you, too, if He comes and speaks to you with the term *'nky*, will know that He is your God; and if He does not, He is not—if one dare say such a thing—your God. So when the children of Israel came before Mount Sinai, and He began His speaking to them with *'nky*, they knew that He was their God.⁷⁸

14. <*I am the Lord thy God*, etc.> R. Joshua ben Levi taught in the name of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai: [By terming Himself *thy God*] the Holy One, blessed be He, provided Israel with a loophole whereby extenuation would be asked for them. For at first they had risen up to say, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7), but then later they said [of the golden calf] *This is thy God, O Israel* (Exod. 32:4); hence God was about to destroy them, as is said *Therefore He said that He would destroy them . . . Moses His chosen stood before Him in the breach, to turn back His wrath, lest He should destroy them* (Ps. 106:23). And Moses said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, was it not to me alone that Thou didst say on Mount Sinai⁷⁹ *I am the Lord THY God*? Was it by any chance that to all Israel Thou didst say "I am the Lord YOUR God?" The Holy One, blessed be He, according to R. Joshua of Siknin citing R.⁸⁰ Levi, replied: Moses, thou dost speak well in defense of My children. In a bygone time I used to address the children of Israel using the singular "thee"—*I am the Lord thy God*. Henceforth I shall speak to them as "you," using the plural, *I am the Lord your God* (Lev. 19:4)—in the plural, so as to enjoin every one of you.

15. R. Simeon ben Yoḥai taught: In connection with the giving of the Ten Commandments, note that the term *'nky* ("I") carries a suggestion of comforting: *'nky* carries this suggestion in

78. Cf. Piska 33.8.

79. "on Mount Sinai"—MSS.

80. "Joshua ben" deleted, as in MSS.

the verse *I am the Lord thy God*, for in the verse *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12) 'nky links "I" with comforting. Accordingly R. Menahem said in the name of R. Abin: The term 'nky, [with which the utterance of Torah began], is thus an utterance of love. Hence it is written *When my cares are many within me, the utterances of Thy love delight my soul* (Ps. 94:19). As R. Abba bar Kahana⁸¹ in the name of R. Johanan taught in a parable: A king who wed a noblewoman wrote out a substantial settlement upon her: "Such-and-such treasures I give you. Such-and-such ships at sea I give you. Such-and-such villages on land I give you. Such-and-such pieces of silver and gold I give you."⁸² Then he left her and went away to a far country by the sea. Thereupon her companions mocked her and said to her: "Get yourself a man while you are young,⁸³ and while your strength is with you!" Whereupon she would go into her bridal pavilion, open the marriage settlement, and have it read aloud to her. She would bring forth [to the attention of her friends] that part of the document which spoke of the substantial settlement, and be comforted.

After many years the king came back from the far country by the sea. He said to his wife: "My little one, I marvel⁸⁴ how you were able to wait for me all these years!" She replied: "My lord the king, but for the substantial marriage settlement which you wrote for me, my companions would long since have caused me to abandon you."

[As her companions mocked the king's wife], so the nations of the earth mock Israel and say to them: How long will you die for your God, letting yourselves be slain for His sake, giving up your lives for His sake? How many afflictions has He brought upon you! How many plunderers has He brought upon you! How many kingdoms has He brought upon you! Turn you to us, and we shall make you generals, governors of prov-

81. "R. Abba bar Kahana"—MSS; P: "R. Abbi."

82. "such and such pieces of silver and gold I give you"—MSS.

83. So MSS, which read *šlyyh*. Friedmann takes the obscure *šlyyh* to mean "pretty."

84. "I marvel"—MSS.

inces, and marshals. Israel's reply is to go into synagogues and into houses of study, open the Scroll, and read in it: *And I will have respect unto you, and make you fruitful, and multiply you, etc.; and I will set My Tabernacle among you, and My soul shall not abhor you* (Lev. 26:9, 11), and thus is Israel comforted.

In the future, when the time of redemption arrives, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to Israel: My children, I marvel how you were able to wait for Me all these years! And Israel will reply: But for Thy Torah which Thou wrotest for us, the nations of the earth would long since have caused us to abandon Thee. Of the Torah it is written *This*⁸⁵ *I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope* (Lam. 3:21). And David said likewise: *Unless Thy Torah had been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction* (Ps. 119:92).

In the name of Resh Lakish R. Abin taught in a parable: A king who became angry at the noblewoman who was his wife put her out of his palace. After many years he wished to fetch her back. She said: "Let him double my marriage settlement for me, and I will come back to him." Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, said: My children, at Sinai I said to you *'nky* once. But in Jerusalem I shall double it and say *'nky* to you twice: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12).

R. Menaheman taught in the name of R. Abin: In return for the love which you breathed forth at Sinai when you said *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7), *I, even I, am He that speaks lovingly*⁸⁶ *to you* (Isa. 51:12).

Why are the Ten Commandments uttered on Sinai addressed to individuals, [while in Leviticus 19 they are addressed to the congregation as a whole]? Because [God sought to plead with those] individuals, [each of whom, as He foresaw], would vio-

85. "This refers clearly to Torah, as it is said *This is the Torah* (Deut. 4:44)." So reads the parallel of this story in Lam. Rabbah, Soncino tr., p. 200. See also Piska 47.4.

86. Here there is a pun on *mnhmkm*, "comforteth," and *mnhmkm*, "speaks lovingly." That is, because you accepted lovingly the Ten Commandments which begin with *'nky*, I shall proclaim your redemption with the same word, with *'nky*, said twice.

late a different one of the Ten Commandments, [and lead others to violate it also]: Micah⁸⁷ (Judg. 17) violated the command *I am the Lord thy God*; Jeroboam (1 Kings 12) violated the command *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*; the man who blasphemed (Lev. 24:11) violated the command *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*; the man who gathered sticks upon the Sabbath day (Num. 15:32) violated the command *Remember the Sabbath day*; Absalom (2 Sam. 15) violated the command *Honor thy father and thy mother*; Joab (1 Kings 2:5) violated the command *Thou shalt not murder*; Zimri (Num. 25) violated the command *Thou shalt not commit adultery*; Achan (Josh. 7) violated the command *Thou shalt not steal*; Ziba (2 Sam. 16) violated the command *Thou shalt not bear false witness*; Ahab (1 Kings 21) violated the command *Thou shalt not covet*, Ahab to whom it was said *Hast thou killed, and also taken possession?* (1 Kings 21:19).

16. *O Lord, Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed; Thou hast shown me strength, and hast prevailed over me* (Jer. 20:7). The congregation of Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, Thou didst entice me before Thou gavest the Torah to me, and so I set⁸⁸ the yoke of commandments upon my neck and I was punished because of my violation of them. Had I not accepted the Torah I would have been like one of the nations, getting neither reward nor punishment.

Accordingly, the congregation of Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, Thou didst entice me at Sinai when Thou saidst to me *I am the Lord thy God*,⁸⁹ and I

87. Micah, "the crushed one," was one of the children used by the Egyptian overseers for building material. God knew that if Micah were allowed to live, evil would result, and so He did not restrain the overseers. Nevertheless, because Moses intervened, God saved Micah's life. Later Micah took the lead in the making of the golden calf and at the head of the mixed multitude shouted "This is thy God, O Israel"—in violation of the First Commandment. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4, 49; 3, 123; and *JE*, 8, 533.

88. So MSS; PE: "Thou didst set."

89. A threat of dire punishment for worshipping other gods would have been more effective than a mere declaration of His divinity.

said to myself: "He is feeble." But *Thou hast shown me strength, and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God* (Exod. 20:5). Thou didst entice me at Sinai when Thou saidst to me *Thou shalt have no other gods*, and I said to myself: "He is feeble." But *Thou hast shown me strength, and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *He that sacrificeth unto the gods, save unto the Lord only, shall be utterly destroyed* (Exod. 22:19). Thou didst entice me at Sinai when Thou saidst to me *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*, and I said to myself: "He is feeble." But *Thou hast shown me strength* in Thy going on to say *for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain* (Exod. 20:7). Thou didst entice me at Sinai when Thou saidst to me *Remember the Sabbath day*, and I said to myself: "He is feeble." But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *Every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death* (Exod. 31:14). Thou didst entice me at Sinai when Thou saidst to me *Honor thy father*. [Feeble]? But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *And he that curseth his father or his mother shall surely be put to death* (Exod. 21:17). Thou didst entice me at Sinai: *Thou shalt not murder*. [Feeble]? But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated in the verse] *Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed* (Gen. 9:6). Thou didst entice me at Sinai: *Thou shalt not commit adultery*. [Feeble]? But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death* (Lev. 20:10). Thou didst entice me at Sinai: *Thou shalt not steal*. [Feeble]? But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *He that stealeth a man . . . shall surely be put to death* (Exod. 21:16). Thou didst entice me at Sinai: *Thou shalt not bear false witness*. [Feeble]? But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *Then shall ye do unto him as he had purposed to do unto his brother* (Deut. 19:19). Thou didst entice me at Sinai:

Thou shalt not covet, and I said to myself: "He is feeble." But *Thou hast shown me strength and hast prevailed over me*, [as indicated by the verse] *Lust not after her beauty in thy heart . . . So he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife . . . shall not go unpunished* (Prov. 6:24-29).

17. R. Jakum and R. Judah [differed in their comments]. R. Jakum said: He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* is as one transgressing all Ten Commandments. *Thou shalt not covet . . . thy neighbor's wife* involves, to begin with, the violation of the command *I am the Lord thy God*.⁹⁰ In this connection R. Abin used to cite the verse *That forsaketh the lord of her youth, and enfeebleth*⁹¹ *the covenant of her God* (Prov. 2:17). He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet*, at the same time violates the command *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*. In this same connection Hizkiah taught: *And it came to pass through the lightness of her harlotry, that the Land was polluted, and she committed adultery with stones and with stocks* (Jer. 3:9). He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* will also violate the command *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*. Scripture prescribes for such a covetous woman: "Then the priest shall cause the woman to swear with the oath of cursing" (Num. 5:21). He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* brings about a violation of the command *Remember the Sabbath day*. As R. Tanhuma explained: Consider the instance when the daughter of a High Priest committed adultery, gave birth to a son, and brought him up. Presently the son brought an offering upon the altar, with the result that he violated the Sabbath, for such a one may not bring an offering.⁹² He who violates the command

90. In order to expose adultery God destroys the ingredients which He used to identify the embryo's original paternity. By thus destroying the image of God imprinted in the embryo, God, so to speak, diminishes Himself. See Piskas 24.2 and 21.18.

91. The word *šḫḫ*, "forget," may by metathesis be read *ḫḫš*, "enfeeble" or "diminish."

92. Not being a priest, he has no right to minister at the altar; and if he ministers at it on the Sabbath he is violating the Sabbath.

Thou shalt not covet will bring about a violation of the command *Honor thy father and thy mother*. [Clans such as] Gaius of Gadara and Lucius of Susitha,⁹³ would sneak into each other's homes and cohabit with the wives of the others, the others with the wives of these. In time a quarrel fell out between them, and a man killed his father unaware that it was his father. He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* will bring about a violation of the command *Thou shalt not murder*. For *Because of the multitude of harlotries, the well-favored [wife] makes herself into a mistress of witchcrafts* (Nahum 3:4)⁹⁴—that is, his wife, finally resorting to witchcraft against her whoring husband, murders him. He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet*, at the same time violates the command *Thou shalt not commit adultery*. In this connection Hizkiah cited the verse, *Through the lightness of her [coveting] harlotry . . . the Land was polluted, and she committed adultery* (Jer. 3:9). He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* will also violate the command *Thou shalt not steal*. Scripture says of him, [*The thought of*] *stolen waters is sweet* (Prov. 9:17). He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet*, [in coveting a woman will commit adultery and hence] will bring about a violation of the command *Thou shalt not bear false witness*. For example, evidence may be required of a person concerning the man who is his real father. Yet thinking that the man is not his father, though actually the man is his father, the person ends up by giving evidence about the identity of his father which is false evidence. Finally the transgressor violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* in its own sense.

93. So emended by Jastrow, p. 236. Susitha (Hippus) was on the eastern shore of Kinnereth near the present site of the Jewish settlement of En-Geb.

Roman jurists used the names Gaius and Lucius as fictitious names, and the Palestinian rabbis did likewise (see P.Ter 10:7, 47b; Git 1:1, 43b; and Saul Lieberman, "Rays from the East," *Annuaire de l'Institut de Philologie et d'Histoire Orientales et Slaves*, 9 [1949], 412). The reference here accordingly may be to Jewish families who took on Roman ways and Roman names.

94. The verse from Nahum is interpolated, as in the parallel in MSS, in SPR, and in MhG Exod., p. 434.

JV: *Because of the multitude of the harlotries of the well-favored harlot, the mistress of witchcrafts.*

R. Judah said: He who violates the command *Thou shalt not covet* is violating at one and the same time seven negative commands: *Thou shalt have no other gods; Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; Thou shalt not murder; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness; Thou shalt not covet.*⁹⁵

18. The second Five Commandments were intended to be paired off with the first Five Commandments. *Thou shalt not murder* corresponds to *I am the Lord thy God*. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If thou didst murder, I hold it against thee as though thou didst diminish the image of God. *Thou shalt not commit adultery* is paired with *Thou shalt have no other gods*. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If thou didst commit adultery, I hold it against thee as though thou didst bow down to another god. *Thou shalt not steal* is paired with *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*. In this connection R. Hiyya cited the verses *Ye shall not steal; neither shall ye deal falsely, nor lie one to another. And ye shall not swear by My name falsely* (Lev. 19:11-12): that is, if you steal, you will go on to deal falsely, go on to lie, and end up swearing by My name falsely. *Thou shalt not bear false witness* is paired with *Remember the Sabbath day*. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If you bear false witness against your neighbor, I shall hold it against you as though you bore witness against Me to the effect that I did not create My world in six days and did not rest on the seventh. *Thou shalt not covet* is paired with *Honor thy father and thy mother*. [Clans like] Gaius of Gadara and Lucius⁹⁶ of Susitha would sneak into each other's homes and cohabit with the wives of the others, the others with the wives of these. In time a quarrel fell out between them, and a man killed his father, unaware that it was his father.

95. R. Judah takes *Thou shalt not covet* in the sense of not coveting money as well as not coveting women. With regard to the link between coveting and having other gods, see Deut. 7:25 which reads: *The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire; thou shalt not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein*. As for R. Jakum, he elaborates upon the disastrous consequences of coveting another man's wife.

96. "Lucius"—MSS; PE: "lkym."

19. The Ten Commandments were intended to be paired off with the ten words⁹⁷ whereby the world was created. *I am the Lord thy God* is paired with *And God said: "Let there be light"* (Gen. 1:3), and of light Scripture says elsewhere *The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light* (Isa. 60:19). The commandment *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me* is paired with *And God said: "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters"* (Gen. 1:6). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Make a separation between Me and between idolatry, which in the verse *They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns* (Jer. 2:13) is implied to be stored and stagnant <water>. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* is paired with *And God said: "Let the waters . . . be gathered together"* (Gen. 1:9). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: The waters accord Me honor and restrain themselves; and will you not accord Me honor in not swearing by My name falsely?⁹⁸ *Remember the Sabbath day* is paired with *And God said: "Let the earth put forth grass"* (Gen. 1:11). For the Holy One, blessed be He, stated that however little you feast on the Sabbath you will still be regarded as one who honors it.⁹⁹ Remember that the world was created in the hope that man would not sin; and men can live without sinning because they can subsist if necessary only on

97. See Ps. 33:6. Ten times the word *way-yomer*, "and [God] said," occurs in the story of creation, nine in Gen. 1 and once in Gen. 2:18. See Moore, *Judaism*, 1, 415; 3, 126.

In the Exodus version of the Ten Commandments there is a reference to creation: *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth*, etc. (Exod. 20:11). The Midrash elaborates this reference into a set of analogies whereby the ten stages in creation anticipate the Ten Commandments.

98. According to Rabbinic tradition, the waters of the abyss are held from flooding the earth by nothing more than the name of God inscribed upon a sherd (see B.Suk. 53a-53b; Midraš Samuel, chap. 26, B, p. 125; and Zohar, *Yiḡro*, 91b). As waves rise, they appear determined to trespass the bounds set for them, yet they always subside.

The commentator draws the parallel for one swearing a false oath. Unlike the waves of the sea, he endeavors through falsehood to trespass the limits set for him.

99. Do not accordingly resort to false oaths on the pretext that you must get more and better food for the sake of the Sabbath.

grasses and herbs that the earth puts forth.¹⁰⁰ *Honor thy father* is paired with *And God said: "Let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven"* (Gen. 1:15). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Behold, for thee I created two lights, thy father and thy mother. Take care in the honor due them. *Thou shalt not murder* is paired with *And God said: "Let the waters swarm"* (Gen. 1:20). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Be not like those fish—the big ones that swallow the little ones, as is intimated in the verse "Wherefore holdest Thou Thy peace . . . when . . . Thou makest men as the fishes of the sea?" (Hab. 1:13-14). *Thou shalt not commit adultery* is paired with *And God said: "Let the earth bring forth the living creature after its kind"* (Gen. 1:24). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Behold I created for thee thy mate. Each and every one should cleave to his mate, to his own kind. *Thou shalt not steal* is paired with *And God said: "Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed,"* etc. (Gen. 1:29). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Not one of you shall put forth his hand in theft of the property or the money of his neighbor—you may take only ownerless property, such as seed-yielding herbs. R. Ḥiyya taught: That which is guarded within a garden¹⁰¹ it is forbidden to take—the taking would be robbery; but that which is not guarded in a garden may be taken, and the taking is not robbery. *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor*, etc., is paired with *And God said: Let us make man in Our image"* (Gen. 1:26). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Behold, for thee I created thy neighbor in My likeness. And thou, by such acts as call for punishment,¹⁰² wouldst swallow¹⁰³ and make an end of thy neighbor. Do not then bear false witness

100. I am indebted to Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik for the interpretation of this difficult passage. Literally "that man would not sin, and would live ever after eating the spontaneous produce of the earth"; it was only after Adam's fall that man was condemned to raise his sustenance by the sweat of his brow.

101. R. Ḥiyya's statement is not in our editions of the Tosefta. See Sefer 'Olam Rabbah, ed. Ratner, p. 25, n. 29.

102. By bearing false witness against him you besmirch the image of Me that is in your fellow man.

103. So SPR₁, which changes the unintelligible *lbylmy* in PE to *lb'lw*, "to swallow him."

against thy neighbor. *Thou shalt not covet* is paired with *And God said: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmeet for him"* (Gen. 2:18). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Behold, I created a mate for thee. Let each and every one of you cling to his mate. Let not a man of you covet the wife of his neighbor.¹⁰⁴

20. The Ten Commandments were intended to be paired off with the lessons taught by the ten plagues which the Holy One, blessed be He, brought against the Egyptians in Egypt.¹⁰⁵ *I am the Lord thy God* is paired with the lesson in the plague of blood: *HE . . . turned their rivers into blood* (Ps. 78:44). Do not talk like Pharaoh who said: *My river is mine own, and I have made myself* (Ezek. 29:3). Say not: I have made myself. *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me* is paired with the lesson in the plague of frogs, who in obedience to God came up in ovens at their hottest.¹⁰⁶ The Holy One, blessed be He, said: The frogs accorded Me honor, but you do not accord Me honor. *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* is paired off with the plague of gnats, for the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured them to stay, and [despite the counteradjurations of the magicians who took God's name in vain] the gnats did not go away.¹⁰⁷ *Remember the Sabbath day* is paired with the plague

104. Cf. 'Arugaḥ hab-bošem, 1, 230.

105. In the Deuteronomy version of the Ten Commandments there is a reference to the Exodus from Egypt: *And thou shalt remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt* (Deut. 5:15).

106. Because Scripture says that the frogs will come up into ovens and into kneading troughs (Exod. 7:28), it is assumed that the frogs leaped into ovens at their hottest, since the kneading trough is near the oven when the oven is heated. See MTeh 28:2.

107. "for the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured them, and [despite the counteradjurations of the magicians who took God's name in vain] the gnats did not go away"—MSS and SPR. Exod. 8:14 is thus apparently rendered "And the magicians did so with their secret arts to get rid of the gnats, but they could not." See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 2d ed., Jerusalem, 1953.

PE: "and they did go hence," or perhaps interrogatively, "Would the gnats go hence?" According to Friedmann, the meaning is that the gnats had not

of swarming confusion.¹⁰⁸ The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Do not confuse weekday and Sabbath nor treat them as though they were the same. *Honor thy father and thy mother*, which is followed by the words *that thy days may be long*, is paired with the plague of murrain.¹⁰⁹ *Thou shalt not murder* is paired with the plague of boils. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Be not a murderer—the blood shed by the victim will break out on the body of the murderer.¹¹⁰ *Thou shalt not commit adultery* is paired with the plague of hail: *So there was hail and fire flashing up amidst the hail*¹¹¹ (Exod. 9:24). Scripture says, *Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? . . . So is he that goeth in to his neighbor's wife* (Prov. 6:27-29). *Thou shalt not steal* is paired with the plague of locusts, of which it is written *They enter in at the windows like a thief* (Joel 2:9). *Thou shalt not bear false witness* is paired with the plague of darkness. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If thy testimony is not as clear to thee as the light, do not give it. *Thou shalt not covet* is paired with the plague of the first-born, for the Egyptians were so steeped in harlotry that all of them were found to be first-born, [that is, the several sons of one mother had different fathers].¹¹²

existed heretofore and were specially created by God's word for the occasion—a feat of original creation beyond the power of Pharaoh's magicians, mere mortal men, to imitate. According to this interpretation, Exod. 8:14 is to be rendered, as in JV, *And the magicians did so with their secret arts to bring forth gnats, but they could not*, and the passage here is to be translated, "for the Holy One, blessed be He, adjured them [to arise], and they rose up."

108. Apparently agreeing with R. Josiah who said: "'*Arob*' means that God darkened the lights of heaven over the Egyptians" (see MTeh 78:11)—darkened them by thick swarms of the sting-fly.

109. In murrain human life also may be endangered. See Piska 17.7; B.Ta 21a; and '*Arugat hab-bosem*, 1, 225.

110. That is, the murderer will be stricken with boils. According to R. Nehemiah, the mark of Cain was boils or leprosy. See Gen. Rabbah 22:12.

111. Hell as the punishment for adultery is indicated in Prov. 9:18; and in hell men are punished by fire and snow (see Tanhuma, *Rē'eh*, 13)—much like the fiery hail of the Egyptians.

112. See Piska 17.5.

21. <I am the Lord thy God.> R. Jonah said in the name of R. Levi: The world was created with the letter *bet*.¹¹³ Even as the *bet* is closed on three sides, but is open on one side, so exposition of what is above the world and what is beneath it, what preceded the creation of man and what is to follow after it, is closed off to you,¹¹⁴ [and only exposition of events in this world after the creation of man is open to you].¹¹⁵

Bar Ḳappara derived the degree of limitation upon exposition from the verse *For ask now of the first days, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon earth* (Deut. 4:32). Offhand, one might suppose, according to this verse, that one is permitted to ask questions in public only about events since the sixth day of creation¹¹⁶ and after it. But since the verse begins with *ask now of the first days*, we have here an instance of Scripture's making a general statement and then limiting it. Accordingly we are to infer the degree of limitation upon exposition from the limiting phrase *since the sixth day*. What is the special character of the sixth day? It is one of the six days of creation. Hence in exposition you are not to refer to any days other than those which are like the sixth day. In short, you are not to expound publicly on whatever took place before the six days of creation. You might think one is permitted to expound publicly on what is above the heavens and what is below the deep. Hence the verse goes on to limit you, saying, *Ask now . . . from the one end of heaven unto the other (ibid.)*. In short, you are not to expound publicly on anything except the world in which you live.

In keeping with the opinion of Bar Ḳappara, R. Yudan ben Pazzi expounded Scripture publicly in regard to the six days of creation.¹¹⁷

113. The first letter of the word *br'fyt*, "in the beginning," with which the Book of Genesis begins the story of creation.

114. The Mishnah states that such exposition is permitted to no more than one other person. See Ḥaḡ 2:1.

115. See Gen. Rabbah 9:1, and *Yēfeh to'ar*.

116. The day God created man. Gen. 1:27.

117. That is, he discussed in public how the earth came into being. According to him, its original state was water. See P.Ḥaḡ chap. 2, beginning, 77c; and end of Nahmanides' comment on Deut. 22:6.

<Another comment:> What is characteristic of the letter *bet*? It has a stroke which projects above and a stroke which extends back from its base. When the *bet* is asked: "Who created thee?" it points to the stroke above, "He who is above created me." "And what is His name?" With the extension of its base it points back [to the preceding letter, '*alef*': "The First]—the Lord is His name."

Another comment: Why the creation with the letter *bet*? Because it stands for blessing.¹¹⁸ But not with the '*alef*', which stands for curse.¹¹⁹ The Holy One, blessed be He, said: The inhabitants of¹²⁰ the world shall not be able to open their mouths and say: "How can the world endure since it was created with a letter symbolic of a curse?" And so I will create the world with the *bet* which stands for blessing, and may it endure!

R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Johanan: Two worlds were created with two letters—with the *yod* and the *he*—this world and the world-to-come. What is the proof? *With Y and H the Lord formed worlds* (Isa. 26:4).¹²¹ But from this verse we still do not know which of the two was created with the Y and which of the two was created with the H. However, since the verse from Genesis reads *These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth, with the H He created them*¹²² (Gen. 2:4), we know that the heaven and the earth were created with the H. If then this world was created with the H, the world-to-come must have been created with the Y.¹²³

What is characteristic of the Y? With a downward stroke it intimates that all the dead will go down to Gehenna, and with

118. The *bet* is the first letter in *bēraḳah*, "blessing, bounty"; also *bet*, which stands for "two," is a sign of the continuance of the species by reproduction.

119. The '*alef*' is the first letter of '*arur*', "cursed."

120. "The inhabitants of"—MSS and SPR.

121. JV: *For the Lord is God (YH), an everlasting rock*. However, the word *byH*, rendered in JV "*is God*," really seems to mean "with God," or, according to R. Abbahu, "*with Y and H*." In line with this interpretation, R. Abbahu goes on to construe the word *ṣur*, "rock," as "*formed*"; and '*wlmym*', "everlasting," as "*worlds*."

122. The word *bhbr'm* is not read as a passive, "when they were created," but as an active form *bē-he bēra'am*, "with the H He created them."

123. The letter *he* perhaps representing *hwh*, "the present"; and the letter *yod* representing *yhyh*, "what is to be."

an upward stroke it intimates that they are destined to rise up again: *The Lord killeth, and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave, and bringeth up* (1 Sam. 2:6). Even as the H is open on all sides,¹²⁴ intimating to would-be penitents that the gate of repentance is open for them, so the Y is bent, intimating that the inhabitants of the world will be bent low [with shame], as is written *All faces are bent low with pallor*¹²⁵ (Jer. 30:6). When David saw the significance of the letters, he began praising the Holy One, blessed be He, with the two letters, with the Y and with the H, as is written *Hallelujah. Praise God in His sanctuary . . . Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord* (YH). *Hallelujah* (Ps. 150:1, 6).

R. Eliezer bar Abina said in the name of R. Aḥa: During all the twenty-six generations [between creation and the giving of Torah],¹²⁶ the 'alef kept raising a cry before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying: Master of all universes, I am first of all the letters. Yet Thou didst not create the world with me but with the *bet*. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Go hence! The entire world, all of it, will be thine. For the whole world and the fullness thereof were created only for the sake of Torah, as is said *If not for My covenant [and for the Torah which is to be studied] day and night, I would not sustain the fixed ways of heaven and earth* (Jer. 33:25). Soon I shall give Torah to My children and I shall inaugurate My giving it to them with thee [the 'alef of 'nky]: I ('nky) am the Lord thy God.

<Another comment:> Why with an 'alef? Bar Ḥusa said: Because the basic meaning of 'alef as a verb is "to teach":¹²⁷ *The word which He commanded to teach the generation*¹²⁸ (Ps. 105:8).

R. Simla'i taught: The world was held in great esteem until

124. See JE, I, 448, plate I.

125. JV: *are turned into paleness*.

126. Cf. Piska 5.3.

127. So apparently SPR: *l'lf*, "to teach."

128. Or, according to Friedmann: "Because, as a numeral, it stands also for 1000, in allusion to the verse *The word which He commanded to a thousand generations*."

the Torah was given. After the Torah was given, the world's worth was shown to be relatively trivial. How so? When you take a balance and put six ounces on one side and forty on the other side, which side will outweigh the other? Will not the forty outweigh the six? [Even so] the whole world, all of it, was created in no more than six days, as is said *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth* (Exod. 20:11), whereas the Torah was given in forty days: *And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights* (Exod. 34:28), and Moses said, *I abode in the Mount forty days and forty nights* (Deut. 9:9). Does it not go without saying that forty outweighs six?

R. Eliezer said in the name of R. Berechiah: [If it were not for Torah] the earth would turn into water: *Should [the words of Torah] be plucked up, then [dissolution into] strange, cold, flowing waters* (Jer. 18:14).¹²⁹

R. Huna said in the name of R. Aḥa: *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof were about to be dissolved; but then because of the I*, [the "I" which begins the Ten Commandments and hence stands for Israel's acceptance of God and the Torah, it stood firm], as the verse concludes, *I caused the pillars of it to stand firm* (Ps. 75:4). Long ago the world might have dissolved and disappeared. Had not Israel stood before Mount Sinai and said: *All that the Lord hath said we will do and obey* (Exod. 24:7), the world might already have reverted to chaos. And who made the world stand firm? *I made the pillars of it stand firm*, because of the merit Israel acquired in heeding "I am the Lord thy God."¹³⁰

22. *Who brought thee out of the land of Egypt* (Exod. 20:2). Hananiah the nephew of R. Joshua said: The clause just cited is so written that it may be read "who have been brought out with thee."¹³¹ That is, I, God, and you, Israel, went forth—if one be permitted to speak thus of God—out of Egypt.

129. JV: *Or are the strange cold flowing waters plucked up?*

130. See above, Piska 21.4.

131. By a slight change in vowels the causative *hoṣe'ṭika* may be read *huṣe'ṭika*, "have been brought out with thee."

Out of the house of bondage. R. Tanḥum bar Ḥanila'i said in the name of R. Berechiah: Only upon Canaan fell the curse of being a bondman: *And he said: Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren* (Gen. 9:25). And whence the proof that all the families of Ham [besides Canaan] are also called bondmen? Because Scripture says, *out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.*

His disciples asked R. Johanan ben Zakkai: Why of all his organs is the ear of the Hebrew slave [who refuses to accept his freedom] pierced through? ¹³² He replied: the ear which heard on Mount Sinai, *I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage* (Exod. 20:2), yet took upon itself the yoke of sovereignty under flesh and blood—the ear which heard before Mount Sinai, *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*, is now the ear of a man who went and got another master for himself. Therefore let the ear come and be pierced through because it did not heed what it heard. In a bygone time Israel were servants of servants. From now on they are servants of the the Holy One, blessed be He: *For unto Me the children of Israel are servants; they are My servants whom I brought forth out of the land of Egypt* (Lev. 25:55).

132. See Exod. 21:6.

SUMMARY

*Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord
thy God in vain, the Third Commandment*

The phrase "taking God's name in vain" or its equivalent, "false swearing," is interpreted successively as follows:

1. Studying Torah and not imparting its teachings to others; or imparting its esoteric teachings to people who will misunderstand them (Sec. 2). The children of Israel, it is observed in passing, heard the first Two Commandments, *I am the Lord thy God* and *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*, directly from God; while the other 611 commandments, beginning with the words *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7), they heard from the mouth of Moses (Sec. 3).
2. Taking the power of an office without being worthy of the office (Sec. 4).
3. The wearing of tefillin throughout the day by people who disregard the name of God upon the tefillin and are hypocritical and dishonest. Only great Masters who made sure of the health of their souls and the cleanliness of their bodies presumed to wear tefillin all day long. But even they were careful not to wear the tefillin under certain circumstances for fear of taking God's name in vain (Sec. 5).
4. The taking of an oath, even when affirming something that is true, is taking God's name in vain, as is illustrated by several stories.
5. A false oath, even when not intended, has grave consequences. Death may ensue. Angels of destruction lodge in the house of him who swears falsely. Even the stones of such a house will be consumed by fire.
6. Swearing falsely by God's name or cursing another by God's name, though not overt acts, are punishable by flogging (Sec. 6).

The discussion concludes with the statement that Israel swear in God's name even when they lie and do not mean to abide by their pledges. The consequence of their not showing adequate reverence for the name of God is that their prayers are not answered (Sec. 7).

THE SECOND PARASHAH

[which expounds the Commandment]:

<Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord

thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold

him guiltless that taketh His name in vain

(Exod. 20:7).

1. It is written *> I will keep the king's command*,¹ and that pertaining to [his] utterance, [as well as] the oath by God (Eccles. 8:2). According to R. Levi, *I will keep the king's command* refers to the command of the King who is the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, the command He gave to us, "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:2). That command will I keep, and also the one pertaining to [His] utterance "Thou shalt have no other gods before Me"² (Exod. 20:3), as well as [His] command pertaining to an oath by God, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

It is written *Fear ye not Me? saith the Lord; will ye not tremble at My presence? who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, an everlasting ordinance, which it cannot pass* (Jer. 5:22). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: The sea—I imposed a decree upon him. Did he perchance transgress My decree and say, "Behold, I shall rise up and flood the entire world, all of it"? God's mercy, no! He did not do so. Instead he kept My decree, as it is written *I . . . prescribed for it My decree, and set bars and doors, and said: Thus far shalt thou come, but no fur-*

1. Literally "mouth."

2. According to R. Joshua ben Levi, Israel heard the first Two Commandments directly from God, from His own mouth. Hence the identification of the *King's command*, literally "King's mouth," as the First Commandment, and *His utterance* as the Second Commandment. See below Piska 22:3.

ther; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed (Job 38:10-11). May not these matters be argued *a fortiori*: If the sea, which was created <without kith or kin>,³ as it written *Be thou ashamed, O Zidon; for the sea hath spoken, the stronghold of the sea, saying: I have not travailed, nor brought forth, neither have I reared young men, nor brought up virgins* (Isa. 23:4)—if, nevertheless, [the sea] kept My decree, you, will you not keep My decree? ⁴

2. *Thou shalt not (l') take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7). According to R. Judah the son of R. Simon, the letter *lamed* in the word *l'* stands for *lēmoq*, "study"; the letter '*alef* in the word stands for '*allef*, "instruct." The *lamed* thus intimates that you are to study matters of Torah with a view to '*allef*—that is, to instructing others in matters of Torah; [for if you do not, you take the name of the Lord in vain].⁵

However, R. Simon, citing R. Joshua ben Levi, cautioned as follows: In the word *lamed* (the name of the letter "l"), the first consonant, "l," stands next to⁶ the consonant "m" (*mem*). [Since *mem* closely resembles the word *mayim*, "water," it may be taken to hint at doctrines as pernicious as contaminated waters. The conjoining of the *lamed*, "give instruction," and the *mem*, "contaminated waters," thus implies]: When you give instruction in Torah, take heed that you gain life thereby.⁷ Do

3. Upon whom the sea's disobedience might be visited. The sea, moreover, expects no reward for its obedience. See Sif Deut. 306; and Piska 21.19.

4. See Piska 21.19.

5. "the letter '*alef* in the word stands for '*allef*, 'instruct' [. . . the name of the Lord in vain]"—MSS. PE: "the letter '*alef* in the word stands for '*elef*, 'thousand.' And so the *lamed* implies 'study words of Torah,' and the '*alef* implies that [besides written Torah], the thousand [and more] traditions [in Oral Law are to be studied]."

6. For *szyk* in the sense of "stands next to" see Kil 6:9 and Par 12:1. I am indebted to Professor Mordecai Margulies for the explanation and the references.

7. See Prov. 4:4-5. R. Joshua ben Levi may have been one of the school of mystics who were not prepared to reveal knowledge reserved for the few to the public at large. Concerning the restrictions on imparting certain teachings see Haḡ 2:1; and Piska 21.21. See also Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3d ed. (New York, 1954), p. 47.

not cause doctrines as [pernicious as contaminated] waters⁸ to come streaming into the world.⁹

A Roman lady put a question to R. Jose, saying to him: Why should the letter *lamed* be taller than all the other letters? He replied: Because the *lamed* is a sort of town crier, and it is the way of such a crier to stand on a high place and from there cry out his warning.

3. How many of the Ten Commandments did Israel hear directly from the Divine Majesty? R. Joshua <ben Levi> said: Two Commandments.¹⁰ But the Rabbis said: Israel heard all Ten Commandments directly from the Divine Majesty, inasmuch as after all Ten Commandments were uttered, what does Scripture tell us? *And they said unto Moses: "[Hereafter] speak thou with us, and we will hear, but let not God speak with us lest we die"* (Exod. 20:16). And what did R. Joshua ben Levi reply? He differed from the Rabbis in holding that chronological order is not strictly observed in the Torah, [so that this verse may have been spoken not after all Ten Commandments were uttered, but sooner]. Even so, why should one conclude that the words *And they said unto Moses: "[Hereafter] speak thou with us,"* etc., were spoken after Two Commandments? Perhaps it was after

8. Cf. Ab 1:11.

9. "However, R. Simon . . . streaming into the world"—MSS. P: "According to R. Simon, citing R. Joshua ben Levi, the letter '*alef*' in the word '*l*' stands for the 1000 [and more] traditions of Torah, [including the esoteric ones]. The *lamed* at the beginning of the word, being the tallest of the letters, is to be regarded as a sort of town crier. For in order to stave off the most severe of punishments care must be exercised in selecting those who are to be taught [esoteric traditions]. Beware, accordingly, in giving certain kinds of instruction. Get yourself life. Do not cause doctrines as [pernicious as contaminated] waters to come streaming into the world." The interpretation of *mdyn* as "to stave off punishments" seems to be arrived at in the following manner: The *mem* and the *daleṭ*, two of the consonants in the word *lamed*, are taken as hinting at *mdyn*, at the care to be exercised to avoid *dyn*, "severe punishments."

I follow Margolioth in deleting as a gloss the words "*ḥdmfrš bsmuḳ . . . mm sfḳ lyh*."

10. This view accords with his opinion that certain kinds of instruction may not be imparted to all and sundry. See above, Piska 22.2.

three.¹¹ [To prove it was after two], R. Azariah and R. Judah the son of R. Simeon and R. Simeon the son of R. Joshua ben Levi cited the verse *Moses commanded us Torah, an inheritance of the congregation of Jacob* (Deut. 33:4). [They pointed out that] while the whole Torah contains six hundred and thirteen commandments, the numerical value of the letters in the word "Torah" is only six hundred and eleven.¹² Hence it is implied that Moses uttered six hundred and eleven commandments to us, but the commandments *I am the Lord* and *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me* Moses did not utter to us—[they were uttered to us directly by the Divine Majesty].

4. *Thou shalt not take*. R. Ze'era said: If Scripture is speaking here of a false oath, since it has elsewhere said *Ye shall not swear by My name falsely* (Lev. 19:12), what is meant by the apparent repetition *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*? That you are not to take upon yourself [God's] authority [as voiced in Torah] if you are not worthy of such authority.

R. Menaḥeman, citing R. Jacob the Armenian,¹³ supported this interpretation by citing the verse *Go not forth hastily to strive* (Prov. 25:8). Note that the word for "strive," *lēriḥ*, is written defectively, so that it can also be read *lēraḥ*, "for authority." That is, "Do not rush to claim Torah's authority." Why not? Because, as the verse concludes, *What wilt thou do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame?* (*ibid.*) Before long, when your neighbors come and ask you questions, what answers would you have for them?

R. Menaḥeman in the name of R. Tanḥum the son of R. Ḥiyya, and R. Mani in the name of R. Jose bar Zebida supported

11. In MSS as well as P the words "Even so why should one conclude . . . Perhaps it was after three" precede "And what did R. Joshua ben Levi reply." I follow Margolioth, Mah, and Friedmann in transposing the words "Even so," etc.

12. $t = 400$, $w = 6$, $r = 200$, and $h = 5$.

13. "R. Jacob the Armenian"—MSS; FT, emending the obscure *mr mny* of P, suggests "who had it from R. Mani."

R. Ze'era's interpretation by citing another verse, *He that philandereth with a woman lacketh understanding*¹⁴ (Prov. 6:32). That is, whenever a man takes on Torah's authority merely to use it, he is no more than a philanderer who uses a woman's body [but does not truly possess her]. *Only he who is ready to blot out his own being [for Israel's sake] May truly possess Torah['s authority]* (*ibid.*), someone *who is ready to blot out his own being*, like Moses, who said: "Yet now, if Thou wilt forgive their sin—; but if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book" (Exod. 32:32). Like Joshua, who said: "Against me, O Lord, [but not against them]" (Josh. 7:8). Like David, who said: "Let Thy hand, I pray Thee, O Lord my God, be against me, and against my father's house; but not against Thy people, that they should be plagued" (1 Chron. 21:17).

According to R. Abbahu, God said: I am called holy, and [when thou takest on Torah's authority] thou too mayest be called holy. But take care! Unless thou hast all those attributes of Mine which I [revealed to Moses (Exod. 34:6-7)], thou mayest not take on such authority.

5. <Another comment: *Thou shalt not take . . . in vain.*> R. Bebai taught: If we are to assume that Scripture is speaking here of a false oath, has it not already been said elsewhere *And ye shall not swear by My name falsely* (Lev. 19:12)? What then is the intention of the apparent repetition *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain*? That you are not to put on tefillin and wrap yourself in your prayer shawl,¹⁵ and then, disregarding the name of the Lord, go forth and commit transgressions.

R. Yannai taught: Because [wearing] tefillin [all day] requires that the person wearing them be clean [of sin, Jews did not presume to wear tefillin throughout the day].

14. JV: *He that committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding, he doeth it that would destroy his own soul.*

15. Tefillin and prayer shawls were considered proof that the wearer took upon himself the name of God, that is, was filled with fear of Him.

[According to another opinion, the reason that Jews avoided wearing tefillin throughout the day was]¹⁶ that hypocrites were wont to mask themselves with them, as is evident from the experience of a certain man who was carrying his money on a Friday. Toward sunset he went to a synagogue where he found someone praying, with tefillin still on his head. Some say this person was a proselyte.¹⁷ The man carrying the money said to himself: Should I not feel free to leave my money with this person who [even at this late hour in the day] wears upon himself the proof of his fear of God? Thereupon he left his money in trust with the person wearing the tefillin. But at the end of the Sabbath, when he came for his money, the other denied the transaction. The first man said: "It was not you that I believed, but the holy Name that was on your head."¹⁸

Thereupon he wrapped himself in his prayer shawl and stood up to pray in the same place, saying to God: "Master of the universe, I put my trust in nothing other than the holy Name which was on his head." After he prayed he dozed off and fell into a deep sleep.¹⁹ Elijah—always remembered on good occasions—appeared to the man and said: "Go tell the wife of the person with the tefillin the password agreed upon between you and her husband: 'On Passover we eat leaven, and on the Day of Atonement, you-know-what.'²⁰ Then say, 'Give me the valuables left with you.'" Thereupon [the man went], and the wife fetched the money and gave it to him. When the husband came home

16. In interpolating the passage within brackets I follow the suggestion of Louis Ginzberg in his *CPT*, I, 260.

Another possible translation, also suggested by Ginzberg, would read: "Tefillin require that the person wearing them be clean of sin. And so the reason the Sages did not insist upon their being worn by Jews was because it was so easy for hypocrites [to put them on]." See Ginzberg's *Genizah Studies* (New York, 1929), 2, 537.

17. "Some say this person was a proselyte"—as in the parallel in *MhG* *Exod.*, p. 410.

18. The letter *šin* which stands for *šaddai*, "the Almighty," inscribed on the outer case of the tefillin.

19. "After he prayed he dozed off and fell into a deep sleep"—*MSS*; *PE*: "Then in the place where he was praying he sat down to rest and fell asleep."

20. That is, pork.

[and she told him what had happened], he began beating her. But she said to him: "Why do you beat me? He gave me the password which we had between me and you, and so I gave the money to him." Thereupon the husband said: "Since we have been unmasked, let us go back to the ways of our ancestors."²¹ Hence there is good reason for saying: Do not trust a proselyte for twenty-two generations.²²

After his recovery from an illness, R. Yannai would wear his tefillin continually for three days, contending that illness washes away all impurities [and frees the body of sin]. <And the proof?> The verse *The Lord . . . forgiveth all thine iniquities . . . as He healeth all thine impurities* (Ps. 103:3).²³

Neither in winter nor summer would R. Johanan ben Zakkai remove his tefillin. And in imitation of him R. Eliezer his disciple conducted himself in the same way.

In the winter, when R. Johanan had his head bundled up, he would wear both tefillin all day; but in the summer he would wear only the arm tefillin.²⁴

21. On the interpretation of *'sur* in the sense of "origin," see Ščrağa Abramson, in *Lēfonenu*, 21 (1957), 95-98.

22. Ishmael the son of Nethaniah who slew Gedaliah the son of Ahikam (Jer. 41:2) is said to have been a descendant in the twenty-fourth generation of proselytes, his ancestress Atarah wife of Jerahmeel (1 Chron. 2:26) having been a heathen. See Kimḥi.

The stigma of the golden calf, symbol of idolatry, is apparently understood as enduring for 24 generations. See B.Sanh 102a.

23. Usually rendered *diseases*; but here apparently understood as derived from *h'l'h*, "impurity."

24. Presumably sweat made it difficult for him to keep his head clean throughout the hot summer day—and cleanliness was a requirement for one who would wear tefillin all day.

The paragraph may also be rendered as follows: "In the winter, when R. Johanan had his head bundled up, he would wear [in the street] the head tefillin as well as the arm tefillin; but in the summer, when his head was not bundled up, he would wear [in the street] only the arm tefillin."

In Palestine, in the third century, Roman soldiers were apt to abuse and attack any Jew who wore his tefillin in the street. Consequently in the winter, when R. Johanan wore some kind of headgear, he could conceal his head tefillin under it, something which of course he could not do in the summer; and so during the summer, when he was in the street, he wore only his arm tefillin under his robe. Rabbi M. M. Kasher called my attention to this interpretation, which is to

When R. Johanan went down to bathe, as soon as he got to the keeper of the clothes at the bathhouse, he would remove his tefillin; and according to R. Isaac, by the time R. Johanan, [on his way back from the bath], reached Jacob²⁵ the keeper of the change-house,²⁶ he would have put them on again.²⁷ As he went up from the bath, his disciples would at once give him his tefillin. At once? But was he not forbidden to take the tefillin then, since he was still naked? R. Hiyya bar Abba explained that [before leaving] the bath chamber R. Johanan used to put on an undergarment.²⁸ Whenever his disciples delayed giving his tefillin to him, he used to tell the following tale: Two arks were with the children of Israel in the wilderness, one the Ark of Him who lives for ever, and the other the ark containing Joseph's remains. The nations of the earth kept asking Israel: What is the significance of these arks? And Israel replied: This is the ark of one who is dead, and this the Ark of Him who

be found in Menahem de Lonzano's glosses on P.Ber 2:3. On the condition of Jews in Palestine in the third century, see Samuel Alexander Jordan, *Rabbi Jochanan bar Nappacha* (Budapest, 1895), pp. 68-69.

25. The word *y'kr* in PE is to be read *y'kb*, as in MSS and in the parallel in P.Ber 2:3, 3c. PE would have to be translated: "by the time R. Johanan was completely beyond the precincts of the bathhouse."

26. The man who changed money into tesserae, tokens of admission into the bathhouse in Tiberias. See J. N. Epstein in *Tarbis*, 1, (1930), 89, n. 4; and Lieberman, *TKF*, *Zēra'im* 1, 244, and 2, 716. See also *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "Baths."

27. The keeper of the clothes was stationed within the bathhouse; but the keeper of the change-house was outside the complex of bathhouses. In other words, on his way to bathe R. Johanan would wear his tefillin until the very moment he got into that part of the bathhouse where everyone was completely undressed. He would put them on again on his way out of the bath at the stall of the change-maker, the point at which all the patrons of the bath were once again fully clothed.

See B. Shab 10a, and Tef 17 (*Seven Minor Treatises*, ed. Higger [New York, 1930], English part, p. 28).

28. In PE as well as in MSS the passage "At once? But was he not forbidden to take the tefillin . . . R. Johanan used to put on an undergarment" precedes the beginning of this paragraph. In transposing the passage, I follow the suggestion of Mah.

For a translation of the several paragraphs beginning "In the winter when R. Johanan," etc., which does not require transposing the passage just cited, see Appendix to this Piska.

lives for ever. Then the nations of the earth would say: But how is it that an ark in which there is a dead man should accompany the Ark of Him who lives for ever? And Israel used to reply: The dead man in this ark was the one who observed all the commandments that are written and are laid away in the other Ark.

And why did R. Johanan think it necessary to tell this tale? R. Ḥanina explained: In order to impart a bit of Torah. R. Mana asked him: "But why always the same one? Had he no other bit of Torah to impart?" Actually, however, R. Johanan meant the tale to be a reprimand of his disciples. He was saying to them: Joseph merited kingship only because he observed the commandments of the Holy One, blessed be He, and you would have me dispense with His commandments!

What blessings does one make over the tefillin? R. Zeriḳa said in the name of R. Jacob bar Idi: When a man puts the tefillin on his arm, he says: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast commanded us to put on the tefillin." And when he puts the tefillin on his head, he says: "Blessed art Thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments, and hast ordained for us the precept of the tefillin."²⁹ And when he removes them, he says: "Blessed art Thou . . . who hast sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to keep His ordinances." The saying of such a blessing accords with the interpretation that in the verse *Thou shalt keep this ordinance* (Exod. 13:10) the tefillin are referred to.³⁰ For according to the interpretation which maintains that

29. "And when he puts the tefillin on his head . . . ordained for us the precept of the tefillin"—MSS, SPR, MC, Mah. Not in P. See *APB*, p. 16.

30. The question at issue is the meaning of *yamim* in Exod. 13:10. The word may mean "years." If so, the verse would read *Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year*, and would refer to the Passover mentioned earlier in the chapter—to a feast, that is, which is observed from year to year. Or *yamim* may mean "days." If so the verse would read *Thou shalt keep this ordinance in its season on certain days, day after day*, and would refer to tefillin which are mentioned in the verse preceding; furthermore, in stating explicitly that the ordinance of tefillin is to be observed during the day, the verse would rule out the night as a time for wearing tefillin.

the statute which ordains Passover is referred to in the verse, a man is not required to say³¹ [a blessing upon removing his tefillin].³²

R. Abbahu³³ said in the name of R. Johanan: When a man wears tefillin at night, he violates a positive commandment. And the proof? The verse *Thou shalt keep this ordinance in its season, on certain days, day after day*³⁴ (Exod. 13:10). <On . . . days,> but not nights; *on certain days*—that is, days other than Sabbaths and festivals.

But did not R. Abbahu sit and teach in the evening with his tefillin on? No. They were just bunched up³⁵ on his head like a tuft of wool.³⁶ Some explain that R. Abbahu, [in declaring that a man who wears tefillin at night is violating a positive commandment], was speaking only of one who puts on tefillin at night, for if they had been on him during the day, he would be permitted to continue wearing them. And others explain: The obligation to wear tefillin holds until people are no longer walking around in the market place—[that is, until evening has passed into darkness].

There are some who would find the proof [that tefillin are not to be put on during Sabbaths and festivals] in the verse *And it*

If the verse, as construed in Palestine, refers to tefillin, their removal at the end of the day is enjoined, since tefillin may not be worn at night. Accordingly, at the end of the day, when the tefillin are to be removed, an appropriate blessing is required. On the other hand, if, as construed in the schools of Babylonia, the verse refers to Passover, then, theoretically at least, tefillin may be worn both day and night. Their removal, accordingly, at the end of the day is not obligatory but optional, and so if they are removed, a blessing stating that a commandment is being performed is not required. See B.Ber 44b, Suk 39a, Men 36b, Nid 51b, and the Tosafot, *ad loc.*

31. Reading not *brh*, as in FT, but *bd'*, "say," as in MSS. On the meaning of *bd'*, see Zechariah Frankel, *Maḥo' hay-Yērušalmi* (Breslau, 1870), p. 9.

32. See 'Orah ḥayyim, *Tēfillin*, 29:1.

33. Like his master R. Johanan, R. Abbahu lived in Palestine.

34. The verse is so read in keeping with the comment which follows. See MC.

35. Saul Lieberman suggests *mšryrn*, "tied them up." See his YKF, p. 354 (on the parallel in P.Er 10:1, 26a). His surmise is sustained by *mšdydn* in MSS, which may represent *mšryrn*.

Reading the word as *mšddn*, Friedmann suggests: "they were put on the side, and kept there, so to speak."

36. Reading not *pkdwn*, "deposit," but *pykryn*, "tuft of wool."

shall be for a sign unto thee (Exod. 13:9)—that is, since Sabbaths and festivals are in themselves signs of Israel's chosenness, they do not require to be distinguished by the sign (tefillin) that the verse refers to.

R. Abbahu asked: If so, why does Scripture go on to speak in the very next verse of *certain days, day after day*, [presumably days other than Sabbaths and festivals]?

Be that as it may, the quest for several verses as proof in this matter is in keeping with R. Johanan's opinion that whenever we know what the law is, but find that its basis in Scripture is not clear, it is permitted to expound more verses than one in order to show the Scriptural basis for the law.³⁷

Whence do we know that women [are free of the obligation of tefillin]? From the verse [which ordains the obligation to put on tefillin, and from the verse immediately following which states] *And ye shall teach them to your sons* (Deut. 11:19), and does not say "to your daughters." That is to say, he who is under obligation to study Torah is required to put on tefillin; but since women are not required to study Torah, they are not required to put on tefillin.³⁸ It was asked: But did not Michal, the daughter of the Cushite,³⁹ put on tefillin, and was not the wife of Jonah among the pilgrims during festivals? And is it not true that the Sages did not interfere with either? R. Hizkiah replied, however, in the name of R. Abbahu, that as a matter of fact Jonah's wife was told to go back home, and as for Michal the daughter of the Cushite, the Sages did interfere with her practice.⁴⁰

6. <Another comment: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain.*> R. Simon said: If Scripture is speaking here of a

37. See Lieberman, *YKF*, pp. 132, 355.

38. See *Torah tēmimah*, Deut. 11:19; and Targum Jonathan on Deut. 22:5.

39. Presumably Saul, who is spoken of in Rabbinic sources as "the Cushite." See MTeh 7:18; and *Talmudic Encyclopedia*, 9, 508-09.

40. The entire passage beginning "R. Yannai taught: Because [wearing] tefillin [all day] requires," etc., appears to be taken from P.Ber 2:3, 4c; and Er 10:1, 26a.

false oath, has it not already been said elsewhere *Ye shall not swear by My name falsely* (Lev. 19:12)? What then is intended by the apparent repetition *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord . . . in vain*? That taking an oath even when affirming something which is true is taking God's name in vain. R. Hunya and R. Jacob bar Abin said in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman: The twenty-four communal councils in the south⁴¹ were destroyed because in affirming by oath things which were true they were nevertheless taking God's name in vain. Hizkiah said: Even if a man by oath affirms of an olive tree that it is an olive tree, and of a fig tree that it is a fig tree, his oath is taking God's name in vain.

R. Haggai and R. Menahem said in the name of R. Simeon ben Laḥish: When a man goes out into the market place and seeing the rains come down, says: "Bring down, O God, much rain," he takes God's name in vain.⁴²

Incidentally, as R. Simon said, an oath is not administered to one who is suspected of swearing dishonest oaths, nor is an oath⁴³ given to one who is eager to swear oaths.

A story told of Bar Telamyon⁴⁴ justifies the Rabbis [who interpreted *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord . . . in vain* as prohibiting the swearing of an oath in God's name in jest, even when the oath was ostensibly affirming the truth]. It happened that a man who had deposited a hundred denar with Bar Telamyon went to get them back. Bar Telamyon said: "What you deposited with me I have already turned over to you." The man said: "Come, I will have you take an oath." What did Bar Telamyon do? He took a cane, hollowed it out, put the hundred

41. These councils constituted the skeleton administration left in Judea by the Romans in 24 cities permitted to have their local administration. See Alon, *Tolḏot*, p. 89. For an earlier discussion of the councils see Samuel Yeivin, *Milhemet Bar-Kokḥba* (Jerusalem, 5706/1946), p. 163.

42. Since the rain had already begun to come down, such a prayer is tantamount to invoking God's name in vain. See Lieberman, *GJP*, pp. 33-37; and *Tarbis*, 20 (1950), 116.

43. "to one who is suspected of swearing dishonest oaths, nor is an oath"—MSS.

44. = "Bartholomew."

denar in it, and then leaned upon it for a walking stick. When he came into the synagogue, he said to the man whose hundred denar were in the cane: "Take hold of this cane with your hand, and I will swear an oath to you," and went on to swear in God's name: "O master of this goodly treasure which was deposited with me, I have turned it over to you." In his anger the man threw the cane upon the ground, and the hundred denar were scattered. As the man began to gather them. Bar Telamyon said: "Gather them, gather them, for it's your own denar that you're gathering!"

<It is written> *The oath of the Lord shall be between them* (Exod. 22:10). If a man makes another swear an oath in denial of a false claim that the first man has made, then the oath which lies between the two shall be turned into a curse upon the first.

In further comment on this verse R. Simon said: When an oath is administered to a man, why are inflated hides brought before him and horns sounded before him? The horns tell him: "Yesterday these hides were filled with bones and sinews, and now they are empty of everything; thus also, when a man swears falsely to his neighbor, he will in the end go forth emptied of all his possessions." This happens, said R. Jose, when the man swears falsely. It happens, R. Jonah added, even when he swears in all sincerity to something which is true.

R. Haggai sat and expounded the saying of R. Jonah by telling the story of a woman who went to knead dough at a friend's house. This woman had two denar tied up in her cloak. She undid the cloak and put the two denar on a cloth in front of her.⁴⁵ [Inadvertently] the two denar were kneaded into the dough. Later she took her finished loaves of bread out of the oven and went away. When her husband said to her: "Give me the two denar," [and she was unable to find them], she went and inquired of her friend concerning them. Her friend said: "May

45. "in her cloak. She undid the cloak and put the two denar on a cloth in front of her"—Cas; PE, as construed by Friedmann, read: "in a cloth which she undid, putting the denar on the cloth she then placed in front of her."

I bury my son⁴⁶ if I know anything about them!" Her sins brought it about⁴⁷ that sometime later she did indeed bury him. The woman then said: "Had my friend not been justly suspected, she would not have had to bury her son." So the woman went again and asked her friend for the two denar, saying: "Did you see these two denar after all?" Her friend replied: "May I bury my other son⁴⁸ if I know anything about them!" Thereupon her sins brought it about that she buried him as well. The woman's husband said to her: "Will you not go and comfort your friend?" Thereupon the woman took the same two loaves of bread and went to comfort her. When the loaf was cut, the two denar fell out of it. Accordingly, it is said: Right or wrong, do not enter [thoughtlessly] into an oath.⁴⁹

<It is written>⁴⁹ *I cause [the oath] to go forth, saith the Lord of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by My name; and it shall abide in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof* (Zech. 5:4). In exposition of the verse R. Samuel bar Nahman said: Curse-carrying angels have no joints, [and hence cannot sit and abide anywhere]. And the proof? Of Satan it is said *From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it* (Job 1:7). Yet it is said of the curse which follows upon a false oath *And it shall abide in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof*. In this connection, R. Abba bar Kahana said: Things which fire cannot destroy, a false oath can destroy. It is in the power of fire to destroy timber: but surely not stones? Yet Scripture says of the curse: *It shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof*.

46. Literally "May that woman bury her son," as a precaution against the actual implementation of the calamity.

47. Presumably this lapse, together with all her other sins committed previously, caused the death of her son.

48. See Lieberman, *GJP*, p. 124; and Matt. 5:34-37.

49. "It is written"—Friedmann's interpolation is justified by Cas; Parma MS and P have "as is said."

It is taught: "A man who transgresses a negative commandment, the transgression not being an overt act, is not punished by flogging except in the following instances: if he substitutes another animal for one already designated as a sacrifice, or if he takes an oath in God's name and does not abide by it, or if in cursing another he uses the Divine Name" (Tos Mak 4:10).⁵⁰ R. Johanan said in the name of R. Yannai: But a man who substitutes another animal for one already designated as a sacrifice is not to be included among the exceptions, for his declaration of his intention is itself an overt act.⁵¹

<And whence do we know that a man who takes an oath in God's name and does not abide by it is to be flogged?> From the verse, said R. Johanan in the name of R. Meir, [that speaks of a man's taking God's name in vain] and concludes *For the LORD will not remove his guilt* (Exod. 20:7)—that is, it is the responsibility of an earthly court to remove his guilt by having him flogged.

And whence do we know that a man who in cursing another uses the Divine Name is to be flogged? R. Simeon ben Lakish said in the name of R. Joshua: It is written *If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Torah . . . [enjoining thee] to fear this glorious and awful Name . . . then the Lord will bring it about that flogging will befall thee*⁵² (Deut. 28:58-59).

A well known assertion of R. Johanan's requires the deduction from the above verse in Deuteronomy as made by R. Simeon ben Lakish. But in regard to the same matter, the assertion of R. Simeon ben Lakish, given below, does not require the deduction from the verse in Exodus. In regard to the teaching concerning a man who, despite warning, proceeds to swear falsely and at the

50. See Piska 14.10; Maimonides' Code, XIV, 1, xviii, 2 (YJS, 3, 50); and IX, vi, 1, 1 (YJS, 4, 176).

51. When he says, "This unconsecrated animal is to be substituted for that consecrated animal," his declaration causes the previously unconsecrated animal to become sacred, so that his spoken word is in fact the cause of an overt action.

52. JV: *the Lord will make thy plagues wonderful*. But see B.Mak 13b and Tem 13b, where this verse is linked with the verse *The judge shall cause [the wicked one] to lie down and to be beaten* (Deut. 25:2). See also *Torah tēmimah* on Deut. 28:58-59.

same time, in cursing another, uses the Divine Name, such a man, according to the assertion of R. Johanan, is guilty of violating two commandments;⁵³ but according to the assertion of R. Simeon, he is guilty of violating one and the same commandment.⁵⁴

7. Why is it that when Israel pray they are given no answer? R. Joshua ben Levi replied in the name of R. Phinehas ben Jair: Because they do not revere the mystery of the Ineffable Name. And there are several verses to support his reply: *Therefore My people shall revere My name; therefore they shall know in that day that I, even He that spoke, behold, here I am* (Isa. 52:6); *And I will betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness; and thou shalt revere the Lord* (Hos. 2:22); *I will set him on high, because he hath revered My name. He shall call upon Me, and I will answer him* (Ps. 91:14-15). Israel's lack of reverence is shown by the fact that in this world Israel swear in God's name even when they lie [and do not mean to abide by what they undertake]. In the time-to-come, however, when they swear, they will always abide by what they undertake, as is said *And wilt swear: "As the Lord liveth," in truth, in justice, and in righteousness; then shall the nations bless themselves by Him, and in Him shall they glory* (Jer. 4:2).⁵⁵

APPENDIX: ALTERNATE TRANSLATION OF TWO PARAGRAPHS IN PISKA 22.5 (pp. 460-61)

In the winter, when R. Johanan wore a turban tight upon his head, he used to wear both [the head tefillin⁵⁶ and the arm

53. The prohibition against false swearing as well as a lack of reverence for God.

54. According to R. Simeon, both acts stem from one attitude—lack of reverence for the name of God. See P.Sheb 3:11, 35a.

55. Cf. MTeh 91:8.

56. The turban was worn over the tefillin.

tefillin all day]; but in the summer [he wore outdoors a scarf wound about his head],⁵⁷ and hence wore only the arm tefillin.⁵⁸

[If the head tefillin may not be worn over the scarf, the arm tefillin may not for the same reason—that is, “interposing” between the tefillin and the skin of the arm—be worn upon the sleeve. But if it be worn in direct contact with the arm], should not such a mode of wearing it be prohibited as improper, because then the man would see his privy parts?⁵⁹ However, said R. Hiyya bar Abba, R. Johanan wore an undergarment⁶⁰ beneath [his tunic].⁶¹

When R. Johanan went down to bathe, he would remove his tefillin as soon as he got to the keeper of the clothes at the bath-house; and according to R. Isaac, by the time R. Johanan, [on his way back from the bath], reached Jacob the keeper of the change-house, he would have put them on again. As he went up from the bath his disciples would at once give him his tefillin. Whenever his disciples delayed giving his tefillin to him, he used to tell the following tale: Two arks were with the children of Israel, etc.

57. Indoors, during the summer months also, he would wear the head tefillin as well as the arm tefillin.

58. According to law, a turban, being an article of wear, could be worn over his head tefillin; hence in the winter R. Johanan wore his head tefillin. On the other hand, a scarf is not considered a piece of apparel, and, as something carried, may not be worn over the head tefillin (see Maimonides' Code, II, III, iv, 23); nor, since a scarf is considered as “interposing,” may it be put between the tefillin and the skin of the forehead. And so during the summer, R. Johanan, when he was outdoors, dispensed with wearing the head tefillin (see Maimonides, *Hilkoṭ hay-Yērušalmi*, ed. Lieberman [New York, 1947], p. 25, n. 3).

59. Usually no undergarments were worn beneath the tunic.

60. Professor Saul Lieberman suggests that ‘*pykrsyn*, “undergarment,” may be derived from the Greek *episarkion*. See his “Roman Legal Institutions in Early Rabbinics and in the *Acta Martyrum*,” *JQR*, 35 (1944), 2.

61. So explained by Professor Saul Lieberman on the basis of a citation from R. Nissim's *Mēgillat sētarim* in the *Sefer ḥasidim*, 1742, p. 417. See Maimonides, *Hilkoṭ hay-Yērušalmi*, *ibid.*

SUMMARY

Remember the Sabbath Day,
the Fourth Commandment

As early as the creation of Adam, God had already designated the Sabbath as His very own. It is the day which Israel, unlike the nations of the earth, reckon exactly as they were commanded to. Explanations follow as to why the commandment in Exodus concerning the Sabbath begins with *Remember*, while in Deuteronomy the commandment begins with *Take care*; and also what is meant by the precept to keep the Sabbath holy (Sec. 1).

Unlike mortal kings, God asks only one day for Himself. It is no more than right, therefore, for Israel to add time to the sacred day by taking it away from the preceding secular day. In an aside, discussion is based on the fact that the evening prayer is optional (Sec. 2).

The meaning of Sabbath rest is considered (Sec. 3). Like circumcision, the Sabbath was ordained for Israel even before the Ten Commandments were (Sec. 4). God describes Himself as resting on the Sabbath in order to emphasize how important it is that man rest on it (Sec. 5). The Sabbath, Israel's mate, is hallowed by a special blessing prescribed for it, by special attire, and by lights. Even when God pronounced sentence against Adam at the end of the sixth day of creation, the light on his and Eve's face was not taken away until the end of the Sabbath. In fact, on the first Sabbath the primeval light continued for thirty-six hours. When this light was gone, Adam, with God's help, made light by striking two flints together.

God also blessed the Sabbath by providing men with additional money to spend for it and by giving the food eaten on it a richer savor. Two stories show that God confers wealth upon those who are concerned with keeping the Sabbath (Secs. 6-7).

In a lengthy dialogue, R. 'Akiba tells Tinneus Rufus that on the Sabbath the flow of the river Sambation (named for the Sabbath) slows down; that God does His work on the Sabbath because the

whole world belongs to Him, and thus He is not restricted from carrying things anywhere throughout His world; and that necromancers cannot raise ghosts from Gehenna on the Sabbath because even the wicked in Gehenna rest on the Sabbath. The nature of God's special work on the Sabbath, reward for the righteous and punishment of the wicked, is defined.

Sabbath dishes have a unique flavor because they contain the ingredients of blessing and hallowing (Sec. 8).

According to Scripture, Abraham had not observed the Sabbath and was given the Land of Israel with its limits fixed exactly. Jacob, on the other hand, imposed spatial limits upon himself in observance of the Sabbath and did not move beyond them, so that he inherited the Land of Israel without fixed boundaries.

The Sabbath was given for enjoyment and for study, and when he who takes delight in the Sabbath asks for something, God grants him his petition (Sec. 9).

THE THIRD PARASHAH

<[which expounds the Commandment]:

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it

holy (Exod. 20:8).>

1. O [Adam, when thou wast still a] *golem*, *thine eyes did see* [all the days], for in thy book they were all written down—even the days that were ordained (Ps. 139:16). [According to the *kētib*, the verse concludes *and not one of them failed to come as God had ordained it*; while according to the *kēri*, the verse concludes] *and yet one of the days was already His*.¹ R. Simeon ben Lakish said in the name of R. Eleazar ben Azariah: At the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, was creating Adam, He had come to the stage in creating him when Adam had the form of a *golem*, an unarticulated embryo, which lay prone from one end of the world to the other. Then the Holy One, blessed be He, caused to pass before the *golem* each generation with its

1. JV: *Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance, and in Thy book they were all written—even the days that were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them*. The word *golmi*, usually rendered "mine unformed substance," is taken as meaning "Adam's state of existence as a *golem*."

righteous men, each generation with its wicked men, each generation with its scholars, each generation with its leaders; and He asked: "Golem, what have thine eyes seen?"² Indeed, one might conjecture that these generations were shown to Adam even before he had reached the stage of being shaped into a golem.³ The Psalm says, however, O [Adam, when thou wast still a] golem, thine eyes did see. In going on to say *for in thy book they were all written down*, to what book does the verse refer? To the book of the generations that succeeded Adam: "This is the book of the generations of Adam" (Gen. 5:1).

As to the interpretation of the concluding words of the verse, namely, *even the days that were ordained*, etc., R. Eliezer and R. Joshua differed. R. Eliezer, [following the *kētib*], read *and not one of them failed to come as God had ordained it*, each on its particular day, as, for example, the day of Sisera, of Senacherib, and of Gog.⁴ But R. Joshua, [following the *kēri*], read *and yet one of the days was already His*: of the three hundred sixty-five days in the solar year, the Only One of the universe already had designated one of them as His very own. And what day was that? R. Levi and R. Isaac differed. R. Levi said that it was the Day of Atonement: *Is such the fast that I have chosen, THE DAY for a man to afflict his soul?* (Isa. 58:5). R. Isaac said, however, that it was the Sabbath day.

Remember the Sabbath day (Exod. 20:8). *By their attitude*

2. The Rabbis gave considerable attention to the embryo, and to the time during its development when it is endowed with the power and capacity to make choices. According to R. Judah, this power is given to the embryo when it is covered with flesh and has blood vessels, and before its limbs are articulated (see B.Sanh 91b, and Yoma 82b). The Rabbis also believed that at this stage in the creation of Adam, the debate whether or not he was to come into being took place (see Gen. Rabbah 8:8, and Lieberman, *HJP*, p. 123-24). I am indebted to Professor Lieberman for this note.

3. "Indeed, one might conjecture . . . into a golem"—as in the parallel in MhG Gen., p. 131. The stages in God's creation of Adam were: the gathering of the dust, the kneading of the dust, the making of the golem, the jointing of the parts (see MTeh 92:3). Now since in Ps. 139:15, in the verse preceding O [Adam, when thou wast still a] golem thine eyes did see, Adam is quoted as saying, *All of me was jointed in the lowest parts of the earth*, the commentator concludes that before the parts were jointed, while Adam's embryo was yet in the golem stage, Adam was shown the generations that were to succeed him.

4. Judg. 4; 2 Kings 19:35; Ezek. 38-39.

toward the one [day] they prove themselves brutish and foolish, prove that the wooden emblem by which they are instructed is no more than vapor⁵ (Jer. 10:8). True, the nations of the world count the first day in the week, the second, the third, the fourth, the fifth, and [the sixth], which Israel term the eve of the Sabbath, but the Sabbath itself the nations do not count as a day of rest.⁶ Israel, however, count the Sabbath exactly as they were commanded.

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Here in Exodus it is written *Remember*, and in Deuteronomy it is written *Take care of* (Deut. 5:12). R. Yudan and R. Aibu said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish: Consider the parable of a king who sent his son to the storekeeper on an errand, having given the boy a coin⁷ and a flask. On the way the son broke the flask and lost the coin. Thereupon the king pulled his son's ear and plucked his hair, and as he gave him a coin and a flask a second time he said to him: "Take care that you lose not these as you lost the others." Even so, because Israel lost in the wilderness⁸ the command which began with *Remember*, God gave them the command again, this time beginning with the words *Take care of the Sabbath*. Hence it is said *Remember* in Exodus and *Take care of the Sabbath* in Deuteronomy.

R. Yudan said: *Remember* is addressed to the nations of the world;⁹ *Take care* is addressed to Israel.

R. Aibu said: *Remember* is addressed to those who are out on the sea [and have lost count of the days], so that they know not whether their activity on any one day is prohibited [because it

5. Very likely the Christian cross. JV: *But they are altogether brutish and foolish, the vanities by which they are instructed all but a stock.*

6. [That is, although the nations designate the days of the week according to their relationship to the Sabbath, by calling them the first day, the second day, etc., yet they do not call the Sabbath Sabbath, i.e. the day of rest, but instead apply the term to the first day of the week. L. N.]

7. Literally "assarius," one twenty-fourth of a denar.

8. By going out on the Sabbath to gather manna (Exod. 16:27), and by the worship of the golden calf which led to the breaking of the first Tablets.

9. They are aware of the Sabbath's existence and do mention it, even though they do not observe it.

is the Sabbath day], or whether their activity is permitted [because it is not the Sabbath day].¹⁰ *Take care*, on the other hand, is addressed to people who are on dry land.

R. Simla'i said: You are to have the Sabbath in mind and remember it before it comes, and take care to observe it after it comes. Specifically how? If a good thing happens to come your way, save it for use on the Sabbath—if it be a new vessel, for example, save it for use on the Sabbath. Thus, as early as the first day of the week, Shammai the Elder used to purchase wood for the Sabbath. Hillel the Elder had another and better idea of conduct, for he used to say, "Let each of your deeds be for Heaven's sake."

R. Abbahu said: If a good thing happens to come your way even as early as the first day of the week, save it for use on the Sabbath. Thus it was that R. Tanḥuma said: Once on a Wednesday, as we were eating inferior dates, superior ones were brought and set before us, but we said: Let them be set aside for the Sabbath.

To keep it holy (Exod. 20:8). How are you to keep it holy? By appropriate food, by appropriate drink, and by a clean garment. R. Ḥanan said: From this teaching it follows that a man is to have two cloaks, one for weekdays and one for the Sabbath. When R. Simla'i preached at Beth Badiah [about the three things to be observed] in honor of the Sabbath,¹¹ people replied: As we dress on weekdays, so we dress on the Sabbath, [for we have no change of cloaks]. He replied to them: "Then you must make some sort of change in your attire." That one should have a clean garment for the Sabbath may be inferred from what Naomi said to Ruth: *Wash thyself therefore, and anoint thee, and put thy raiment upon thee* (Ruth 3:3). But was Ruth then naked? Of course not! What Naomi meant by her words was: "Put thy Sabbath raiment on."

10. Such men are to count six days, and on the seventh take cognizance of the Sabbath by saying kiddush and habdalah. See B. Shab 69b.

11. "When R. Simla'i preached at Beth Badiah . . . in honor of the Sabbath"—Parma MS. Beth Badiah is in the area of Akko. See P. Demai 2:1, 22d. PE: "When this was expounded in Tiberias."

2. *Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy work* (Exod. 20:9). R. Yudan and R. Aibu said in the name of R. Simeon ben Laḳish: It is the way of the world that even a king who considers himself enlightened¹² might say to his servants: "Work one day for yourselves and six days for me." Not so the Holy One, blessed be He. This is what the Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel: "My children, keep six days for yourselves, and keep only one day for Me."

<And the seventh day is a Sabbath unto the Lord thy God (Exod. 20:10).[>] The addition of the word *And* to the phrase *the seventh day . . . unto the Lord thy God* refers, says R. Yudan, to the hour which is added to the sacred by taking it away from the secular: [what is added is the last hour in the sixth day], this being the one in which the work of creating the world was finished.¹³ In this connection R. Ḥanina reported: One time R. Ishmael drew me into a certain inn¹⁴ and said to me, "This was the place where my father used to recite the Sabbath eve prayers during the late afternoon on Friday."¹⁵ According to R. Aḥa, R. Johanan disputed this practice.¹⁶ But there was no cause for him to dispute it, since it is accepted that time can be added to the sacred by taking it away from the secular. We are told, for example, that men who had traveled up to Sepphoris to spend

12. "who considers himself enlightened"—Cas and P, as emended by MC, read *kšhw' pwlysupws*. FT: "for a king whose servants are men of war that he say to them," etc. Friedmann thus takes *kylsupys* (P), or *kylwpys* (as in PE), to be a corruption of the Greek *polemistēs*. The children of Israel, being a kingdom of priests, are regarded as God's men of war.

13. The reference is to the phrase "the sixth day" (Gen. 1:31) which, unlike the preceding days, has the definite article, the letter *he*, whose numerical value is five. The sixth day, the letter intimates, ends in the fifth hour in the afternoon. Hence Scripture goes on to say *And on the seventh day God finished His work*, part of the sixth day being included in the seventh, that part which is dedicated *unto the Lord thy God*.

14. "inn"—MSS; PE: "innkeeper."

15. It being too late in the afternoon to reach the ultimate destination before the onset of Sabbath. Concerning R. Ishmael's preoccupation with his father's teachings and practices, see Jacob Neusner, "The Last Link: Rabbi Ishmael the son of Rabbi Jose," *Judaica*, 1 (1960), pp. 3–20.

16. Presumably on the ground that one may not utter the evening prayer in the late afternoon.

the Sabbath would remark that in the city [of Arab, whence they had just come], R. Hanina ben Dosa had already recited the Sabbath eve prayers.¹⁷

Others say, however: It was the following practice, as reported by R. Hanina, that R. Johanan disputed. R. Hanina reported: One time R. Ishmael drew me into a certain inn and said to me, "This was the place where my father used to recite the post-Sabbath prayer while it was still the Sabbath." But there was no cause for R. Johanan to dispute even this practice,¹⁸ for R. [Judah] used to tell Abdan, his interpreter,¹⁹ to announce to the congregation: "Whoever wishes to recite the post-Sabbath evening prayer may do so while it is yet day." [Were it not for such an announcement, the post-Sabbath evening prayer might not have been said at all, since its recital was considered optional]. Thus in the School of R. Yannai they used to say: If a man had gone to his bed, he was not put to the trouble of getting up again [in order to say his evening prayer].

R. Ze'era once remarked: Whenever I fail to say my evening prayer [before going to bed], I get sick.²⁰ Accordingly, he was told: You have no choice but to follow the advice of R. [Judah], who used to tell Abdan to announce to the congregation: "Whoever wishes," and so forth.²¹

3. *A rest for*²² *the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:10). R. Tanhuma, or, according to some, R. Eliezer, said in the name of R. Meir: The words mean, Rest like your God. Even as your God rested from

17. Though they, of course, had left the town, which was not far from Sepphoris in Upper Galilee, while it was yet day.

18. "others say, however . . . to dispute even this practice"—MC, as in the parallel in P.Ber 4:1, 7c, and in Gen. Rabbah 10:8.

19. Literally "Amora." In lengthy popular discourses the lecturer whispered his statements to an interpreter, who then spoke them aloud to the people.

20. Ginzberg suggests the reading *mtb'yt*, "I have nightmares." See his *CPT*, 3, 167.

21. The discussion in the entire passage is based on the premise that the evening prayer, being optional, has no fixed hour in the day when it should be recited. See *Sefer hare'dim* on P.Ber 4:1; and [Piska 49.1].

22. JV: *A Sabbath unto*.

saying [the words which created the world],²³ so are you to rest from saying [worldly things which have no relevance to the day of rest].²⁴ Thus, according to R. Hiyya bar Abba, whenever R. Simeon ben Yoḥai's mother indulged in too much talk on the Sabbath, he would say to her: "Mother, it is the Sabbath," and she would grow silent. And R. Ḥanina taught: Only reluctantly did the Rabbis permit inquiry after a person's health on the Sabbath.²⁵ R. Aibu said: Rest even from the thought [of labor].²⁶ A story is told, said R. Berechiah, of a pious man who took a walk in his vineyard to find out what it required. When he saw a breach in it, he resolved to repair it at the departure of the Sabbath. But then he said: Since the thought of repairing it came to me on the Sabbath, I will leave it for ever unrepaired. How did the Holy One, blessed be He, reward him? A caper bush which grew up in the vineyard fenced the breach, and on the fruit of the bush he sustained himself the rest of his life.

4. *Thou shalt not do any manner of work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter . . . nor thy proselyte that is within thy gates* (Exod. 20:10). A pagan sage asked Rabbi [Judah]: If circumcision is so beloved [of God], why was the mark of circumcision not given to Adam at his creation? Rabbi [Judah] replied: According to your reasoning, why should a man shave from his head the hair [with which he was born], but later on let the hair of his beard grow? The pagan sage replied: Because the hair on his head grew with him in the days of his foolish youth. Rabbi [Judah] then argued: If so, he should blind his eyes, lop off his hands, and break his legs, which also grew along with him in the days of his foolish youth. The pagan sage exclaimed: Have we come down to such drivel? The Rabbi replied: I can-

23. Inasmuch as the Sabbath is meant for Israel, why should Scripture say *A Sabbath for . . . thy God*? To teach, says the commentator, that man too is to rest in the manner in which God rested on the Sabbath. Cf. Ab 5:1.

24. See *Korban ha-'edah* P. Shab 15:3.

25. Such inquiry, being essentially unnecessary, was nevertheless permitted, in order to avoid the appearance of discourtesy.

26. "of labor"—as in Mek, 2, 253.

not let you go without a proper answer. And so observe that [almost] everything that was created during the six days of creation needs finishing: mustard needs sweetening, vetch needs sweetening, wheat needs grinding, and even man needs finishing.

Aquila the Proselyte asked R. Eliezer: Since circumcision is so beloved of the Holy One, blessed be He, why was its performance not included among the Ten Commandments? R. Eliezer replied: Because it was given before the Ten Commandments, since it is written *and keep My covenant* (Exod. 19:5), the reference being not only to the covenant of the Sabbath but also to the covenant of circumcision.²⁷

A Roman lady asked R. Jose bar R. Ḥalafta: If circumcision is so beloved of the Holy One, blessed be He, why was its performance not included among the Ten Commandments? He replied: As a matter of fact it was included, as implied by the words *thy proselyte within thy gates* (Exod. 20:10)—that is, once the proselyte has been circumcised he is considered as having entered the covenant of Israel and therefore is expected to keep the Sabbath.²⁸

5. *For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth* (Exod. 20:11). Did it really take six days to create them? Was it not said long ago, *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth* (Ps. 33:6)? Genesis says "six days," however, so as to remind the wicked of their requital for working [six days of the week] to destroy the world which it took six days to create; and to assure the righteous of their good reward for working [six days of the week] to maintain the world which it took six days to create.

27. Both covenants having been ordained before the revelation at Mount Sinai: Sabbath—even though included in the Ten Commandments—having been ordained at Marah (see Exod. 15:22–25; Mek, 2, 94; MTeh, 1, 227, and note); and circumcision having been decreed as a covenant between God and Abraham.

28. "once the proselyte . . . expected to keep the Sabbath"—as in the parallel in MhG Exod., p. 418; PE are obscure. [PE: "that is, the proselyte who is to keep the Sabbath by (virtue of his having entered, through circumcision, into) the covenant, as did Israel." L. N.]

Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is (Exod. 20:11). The apparently unnecessary words, *the sea*, imply that God has creatures in the sea to correspond to the creatures on dry land.²⁹ Thus Scripture says, *Yonder sea, great and wide, therein are creeping things innumerable, living creatures, both small and great . . . there is leviathan whom Thou hast formed to sport therein* (Ps. 104:25-26).

And rested on the seventh day (Exod. 20:11). Is it possible to say of God that He toils or is weary? Has it not been said of Him that *He fainteth not, neither is weary* (Isa. 40:28)? And yet here the verse says *and rested*. Accordingly, man, of whom Scripture says, *For man is born for toil* (Job 5:7), should understand how greatly necessary it is that he rest on the seventh day.

6. *Wherefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it* (Exod. 20:11) [by setting it apart], for it has no mate. The first day of the week goes with the second, the third with the fourth, the fifth with the sixth. But the Sabbath has no mate. Another comment: A festival or the Day of Atonement may be postponed,³⁰ but the Sabbath may not be postponed. The Sabbath spoke right up to the Holy One, blessed be He: Each of the days has a mate, but I have no mate. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: The congregation of Israel will be thy mate. And when Israel stood on Mount Sinai, God said: Re-

29. Since the sea is part of the earth, the words *the sea*, considered superfluous, are taken to imply that the words which follow, namely *all that in them is*, words which have reference to the earth as well as the sea, indicate that whatever creature is found on the earth has its counterpart in the sea. See Tos Kil 5:10; P'Shab 14:1, 14c; B.Ḥul 127a; Tanḥuma, *Wayyikra*, 8. The verse from the Psalms, after mentioning all kinds of creatures in the sea, cites the leviathan by name. By analogy with the foregoing, this citation is taken to mean that the leviathan is as large as all the other creatures of the sea together, for a general class with a particular of the class given as instance is sometimes taken to mean that the particular is the counterpart of the class. See Mē'ilta de-Rabbi Simeon ben Yoḥai, ed. Epstein-Melamed (Jerusalem, 5715/1955), p. 151.

30. These are dependent on the day which the court declares to be the New Moon; thus if the New Moon is declared a day later, these too fall later. See B.RH 20a.

member the special thing I told the Sabbath, namely that the congregation of Israel is to be thy mate, as is said *Remember the Sabbath day to hallow it* (Exod. 20:8), [by uniting with it in hallowed wedlock].

In the School of R. Ishmael it was taught: He blessed it with the manna and hallowed it by the manna. He blessed it with the manna, since on the other days of the week there was only one 'omer a head, but for the Sabbath there were two 'omers.³¹ And hallowed it by the manna: *And it did not rot, neither was there any worm therein* (Exod. 16:24).³²

Rabbi [Judah] taught in the name of R. Nathan: God hallowed it by prescribing a blessing for it. From this teaching it follows that at the arrival of the Sabbath one declares it holy by reciting a blessing over a cup of wine. And Rabbi [Judah] went on to say: God hallowed it by prescribing a special costume, which, according to R. Ḥanina, means that a Sabbath garment must be put on; according to R. Abbahu, means that a man must mingle some other piece of apparel with his weekday attire; and according to Abin bar Ḥisdai, that he must let his cloak hang free.³³ Thus, as it happened,³⁴ R. Jeremiah and R. Ze'era were walking together [on a Sabbath]. And when R. Jeremiah's cloak got tucked in, R. Ze'era pulled it free.³⁵ From this example it follows that [on the Sabbath] a man must let his cloak hang free.

R. Eleazar the son of R. Jose³⁶ said: God hallowed the Sabbath by way of the lamp. And this I know from my own experi-

31. See Exod. 16:16 ff.

32. In keeping the manna from spoiling on the Sabbath, God gave the manna and the Sabbath a quality which transcended the physical—a quality of holiness.

33. If he possesses only this one cloak—unlike weekdays, when a man works in the field with the cloak tucked in.

34. With Friedmann, I delete the words "R. Eliezer, R. Ze'era and," which are in P.

35. R. Ze'era, R. Jeremiah's master, was very short and his legs were crooked; if we assume that R. Jeremiah was tall, then it was quite an effort for R. Ze'era to reach up and pull down R. Jeremiah's cloak. Wearing it free was of course a sign that its wearer was not at work.

36. "R. Jose"—MSS; P: "the son of R. Jeremiah."

ence. One time I lighted a lamp on the eve of the Sabbath, and it remained lighted until the end of the Sabbath. And at the end of the Sabbath I found the lamp full of oil, not depleted by a drop.

R. Simeon ben Judah of Kefar Anin³⁷ said in the name of R. Simeon: God hallowed the Sabbath by way of the heavenly luminaries,³⁸ and blessed it by way of the light on the faces of Adam and his wife. Thus Adam's pristine splendor was not taken away from him until the end of the Sabbath. At the end of the Sabbath <his face> was changed, as is said *And the splendor of [Adam's] face is changed* (Eccles. 8:1). And as is also said *Thou changeest his countenance, and sendest him away* (Job 14:20). That the splendor of Adam's face was not taken away until the end of the Sabbath is in keeping with the opinion of the Rabbis but not with R. Jose's. For R. Jose used to say: Not even for one night did Adam abide in his pristine glory.⁴⁰ And the proof? *But Adam abideth not the night in glory* (Ps. 49:13). The Rabbis say, however: Adam did abide overnight in his pristine glory. But at the end of the Sabbath his glory was taken away from him, and God drove him out of the Garden of Eden, as is said *So He drove out Adam* (Gen. 3:24).

[This difference of opinion parallels an earlier one between R. Judah the son of R. Simon, and R. Levi citing R. Nezirah]. For R. Judah the son of R. Simon said: By means of the primeval light which was created on the first day, Adam had been able to look and see from one end of the world to the other. But then, [after Adam's disobedience], the Holy One, blessed be He, seeing the wicked deeds of the generation of Enosh, the wicked deeds of the generation of the flood, the wicked deeds of the

37. MC emends "Akko." So too Mek, 2, 256.

38. Through Adam's sin it was decreed on the eve of the Sabbath that the primeval light should be hidden, yet the light of the luminaries was not diminished until the termination of the Sabbath.

39. The Hebrew word 'Adam' at the beginning of the verse is taken not in the sense of "man," as in IV, but literally, as referring to the first Adam.

40. Adam was made on the sixth day, and according to Rabbinic tradition disobeyed God on the day of his coming into being.

neration of the dispersion of races, hid the primeval light
 rthwith, and now holds it ready for the righteous in the world-
 come, as is said *But the light on the path of the righteous* ⁴¹ *is*
the light of [the world's] dawn ⁴² (Prov. 4:18). On the other
 and, R. Levi said in the name of R. Nezirah: The primeval
 ght served for thirty-six hours: for the twelve hours of the day
 eceding the Sabbath, for the twelve hours of the night of Sab-
 ath, [which otherwise would have been dark], and for the
 elve hours of the Sabbath day itself. When Adam sinned, the
 oly One, blessed be He, was about to hide the light, but did
 ot, for He wished to pay honor to the Sabbath. And the proof?
God blessed the seventh day (Gen. 2:3). Wherewith did He bless
 ? With light. For when the sun sank on the first Sabbath eve,
 e light [of the world's dawn] continued to serve.⁴³ Thereupon
 l creation began praising the Holy One, blessed be He. Of this
 is written *Under the whole heaven they sing praises to Him* ⁴⁴
 ob 37:3). Wherefore? Because of *His light unto the ends of the*
rth (*ibid.*). At the close of the Sabbath, as the sun was setting
 id a darkness came creeping up, Adam took fright, saying:
Noe is me! Will not the serpent be able now to bite me and
ve? Will not the serpent, to whom it was said [Adam] shall
uisse thy head (Gen. 3:15), now be able to bite me—*Surely in*
the darkness [the serpent] shall bite me (Ps. 139:11)?” ⁴⁵ There-

41. So Ibn Ezra; JV: *But the path of the righteous.*

42. Or, as *the light of darkness*, that is the light shining in the night, which identified as the perfect light that shone during the seven days of creation.

43. After Adam sinned, six things—the splendor of his countenance, the length of his life, the height of his stature (see Piska 15:3), the instantaneous maturing of the fruits of the earth, the instantaneous maturing of the fruits of the tree, and the primeval light of the seven days of creation—were taken away. They were taken away and not restored to him, except for the primeval light, symbol

God's perfection, the light wherewith He enfolded Himself to create the world—it was held over for the duration of the seventh day, the Sabbath. Thus the Sabbath, the perfect day, was blessed by the primeval light, God's own perfection. See Gen. Rabbah 12:6 and 3:4; Piskas 14.10 and 46.1.

44. JV: *He sendeth it forth under the whole heaven.* But in this comment the word *yšrw* is interpreted as a form of *šyr*, “sing.”

45. The entire Psalm is interpreted by the Rabbis as referring to Adam. See Piska 23.1.

upon what did the Holy One, blessed be He, do for Adam? R. Levi said: He had Adam come upon two flints which Adam struck one against the other until fire came out of them, whereupon Adam recited over the fire "Blessed art Thou . . . who createst the light of the fire." Of this event the verse in the Psalm goes on to say, *But then the night was light as when Eden was still mine (ibid.)*.⁴⁶ This account accords with Samuel's teaching, for Samuel used to say: Why should the blessing ". . . who createst the light of the fire" be recited over a lamp at the close of the Sabbath? Because that was the time when fire first came into being.

R. Huna taught in the name of R. Abbahu who taught in the name of R. Johanan: This blessing is to be recited also at the close of the Day of Atonement, because no fires were lighted during all of this day.⁴⁷

Another comment: God blessed⁴⁸ the Sabbath day by providing additional expenditure for it. A blessing is set down in Scripture for each day that the stock of creatures thereof is depleted, and hence the stock does not stay depleted. Thus the fifth day was the day on which fowl and fish were created, and since men catch and eat these, Scripture set down a blessing concerning them, so that their stock suffers no depletion. But what necessity was there for a blessing on the seventh day, unless God were blessing it in order to provide additional expenditure for it? Another comment: <God blessed it> by giving the food eaten on it a richer savor.

R. Phinehas said: There is a story of a pious man in Rome who used to honor the holy days and Sabbath. On the eve of a Sabbath—some say it was the eve of the Great Fast—he went up to the market to buy something, and he found nothing except

46. IV: *But the night was light about me. Apparently badā'eni, "about me," is here rendered as though it were a form of "Eden."*
 47. There were places where on the Day of Atonement no lamps were lighted or places where there were sick people. See Pes 4:3. Accordingly, inasmuch as the kindling in the home of a lamp at the end of the Day of Atonement restored the joy of seeing light in the home, the blessing "who createst the light of the fire" was required.
 48. "blessed"—Friedmann's emendation; MSS and P: "hallowed."

one fish. Now the governor's servant [was there and he] also wanted the fish.⁴⁹ And the one bid up for it, and so did the other. In the end the Jew bought the fish at a denar a pound. At meal time, the governor said to his servant: There is no fish. The servant replied: Today only one fish was brought to the market, and a Jew bought it at a denar a pound. The governor asked: You know him? And the servant replied: Yes. The governor said: Go forth and summon him, for apparently the Jew owns a treasure which properly belongs to the king. The servant went forth and summoned the Jew. The governor asked: What are you? The Jew replied: I am a Jew. The governor asked: What is your work? ⁵⁰ The Jew replied: I am a tailor. The governor asked: But is there a tailor who can afford to eat food at a denar a pound? ⁵¹ The Jew said: My lord, if permission be given me, I would say something to you in my defense. The governor said: Speak. The Jew said: We Jews have one day which is more precious to us than all the other days of the year. That day atones for all the sins which we have committed during the year so that they are forgiven us.⁵² Therefore we honor it more than any other day of the year. The governor then said: Since you bring reason for what you have done, you are free to go.

How did the Holy One, blessed be He, requite the tailor? He caused him to find in the fish a gem of purest ray, a pearl, and on the money he got for it he sustained himself all the rest of his days.

7. R. Ishmael asked Rabbi [Judah]: The people of Babylonia—by virtue of what do they live [in prosperity]? He replied: By virtue of [their study of] the Torah. The people of the Land of Israel—by virtue of what do they live [in prosperity]? He replied:

49. "also wanted the fish"—so possibly Parma MS, which reads *hyyb* and is emended by Professor E. E. Urbach to read *tyyb*, "wanted it." PE: "was also standing there."

50. "The governor asked: What is your work?"—MSS and parallel in *MhG Gen.*, p. 420.

51. The obscure *dmry*, "of his master," which follows in P, is deleted, as in MSS.

52. "That day atones . . . are forgiven us"—translation suggested by Professor Saul Lieberman; PE are somewhat obscure.

By virtue of Temple offerings and tithes. The people of Syria—
 fact that they honor Sabbaths and festivals. In this connection
 R. Hiyya bar Abba told the following story: Once a man of Lao-
 dica⁵³ invited me [to his house] and had a silver tray brought
 in whose handles and feet were also of silver, and it took twenty-
 four men to carry it. All the kinds of food created during the six
 days of creation were upon it to be eaten. And two children were
 standing on it, one on the right and one on the left. One cried out
 saying: *The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof* (Ps.
 24:1); and the other cried out saying: *Mine is the silver, and Mine
 the gold, saith the Lord of hosts* (Haggai 2:8). And why these
 pronouncements? To remind the man of Laodicea not to exalt
 himself. I said to him: My son, how did you merit all this wealth?
 He replied: Master, I was a simple butcher. And whenever I
 found a fat-fleshed animal during the weekdays, I would set it
 aside to be sold for the Sabbath.⁵⁴—Now to what extent is a man
 required to go in honor of the Sabbath? According to Rab, to
 the extent of buying a piece of meat; but according to Samuel, no
 more is required than any addition at all to the usual fare,⁵⁵ [so
 that the butcher might have been left with his meat unsold.]—
 Therefore I said to the butcher: [Such concern for the Sabbath
 shows that] it was not for naught that you came to all your
 wealth.

8. The wicked Tinnus Rufus⁵⁶ asked R. Akiba: Why does the
 Sabbath day differ from other days? The latter replied: Why does
 one man differ from another man? The former said: What did I

53. A town in Syria.

54. The butcher took a chance, since the meat might have spoiled in the
 meantime.

55. I follow David Luria, who regards the obscure word *shkmydh* as repre-
 senting in corrupt form the two words *twist mydy*, "the addition of anything
 at all." In his *Lehnmwörter*, p. 584, Krauss, by metathesis, regards the word as

temachites, "filleted fish." Cf. Piska 21:19.

56. A governor of Judea who on Hadrian's order had the territory of
 Jerusalem and the Temple Mount plowed up, as a sign that no city was ever to
 be built again on that spot.

ask you, and what did you reply to me? R. 'Aḳiḅa answered: You asked me, "Why is the day of rest different from other days?" and I replied, "Why is⁵⁷ Tinneus Rufus different from all other men?" Tinneus Rufus said: Because the king wishes to honor me. R. 'Aḳiḅa then said: The King who is King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, wishes that Israel should honor the Sabbath. The other asked: How is one to know this? R. 'Aḳiḅa replied: It is proved by the fact that the river Sambation, which [flows so swiftly] on weekdays that it pulls up [the stones in its bed], does not pull them up on the Sabbath. Nay more, those who ate manna in the wilderness bear witness to God's concern for the Sabbath, since manna came down only on weekdays; it did not come down on the Sabbath, whereof it is written *And Moses said: Eat that today; for today is a Sabbath unto the Lord; today ye shall not find it in the field* (Exod. 16:25). Tinneus Rufus declared: For your proofs you go as far afield as the wind.⁵⁸ R. 'Aḳiḅa replied: The experience of necromancers of which I shall tell you [after the Sabbath is over] will prove beyond a doubt what I say.

[Next day], by the time the order of prayers [for the close of the Sabbath] was finished,⁵⁹ Tinneus Rufus came back and asked: If God wishes that Jews honor the Sabbath, why does He do work on the Sabbath? R. 'Aḳiḅa asked: And what work does He do? The other replied: He makes winds blow, clouds rise, and rain come down. He makes dew drop, the sun shine, fruits grow fat, and in addition answers women in childbirth. In short, all that He does on weekdays, He does on the Sabbath. R. 'Aḳiḅa answered: I know that you are versed in the law of the Hebrews, and so I ask you to consider the case of two people who live <in one courtyard>: if one does not set up an 'erub⁶⁰ and the other

57. "wicked," which is in P and Parma MS, I delete, with Friedmann.

58. That is, your reply is irrelevant, since nowadays there is no manna, and no one knows the location of the river Sambation. See Še'eltoṭ dē-Raḅ 'Aḳai (Wilno, 1861), p. 4.

59. See B. Z. Bacher, *'Erḳe Midraṣ* (Tel Aviv, 1923), p. 241.

60. The several inmates of the courtyard contribute their share toward a dish which is deposited in one of the dwellings, by which act all the dwellings are

does not set up an *crub*, would either be allowed on the Sabbath to carry anything [from one household to the other] ? When only one, however, lives in a courtyard, he is allowed on the Sabbath to carry things anywhere in the courtyard. So, too, since the whole world belongs to the Holy One, blessed be He, and no one else shares the domain with Him, He carries things on the Sabbath anywhere throughout His worlds.

Now to come back to those who set out to raise a ghost by means of necromantic incantations: they will bear witness to God's concern for the Sabbath, since they succeed in raising one on any weekday, but do not succeed in raising one on the Sabbath. If you do not believe me, go and test the truth of what I say on your father (may his bones crumble to dust) ! Tinnus Rufus went on Sunday and Monday and raised his father's ghost. On Tuesday, on Wednesday, on Thursday and Friday, he raised him. On the Sabbath, however, he could not raise him. But after the Sabbath he raised him again. And so he asked his father's ghost: What! Do you keep the Sabbath? Have you become a Jew since you died? The father replied: He who does not observe the Sabbath properly when he is in your world is constrained to observe it properly here. Tinnus Rufus asked: And what activities are there among you? The ghost replied: We are punished on every one of the weekdays, but we are allowed to rest on the Sabbath, up to the time when the order of prayers for the close of the Sabbath is finished.⁶¹ And when the order of prayers is finished there appears an angel named Durnah who has charge of souls, and who comes and takes our souls and casts them into that land of which it is written *A land of thick darkness, as darkness itself, slime*,⁶² no more order (Job 10:22). What is meant by *slime*, etc.? It means that the ghosts are told "Go forth to death (ś *lmw*)"—[that is, you must return to suffer your weekday punishment in the land of darkness]—"since the order of prayers

considered as common to all, and the carrying of objects on the Sabbath from one to another and across the court is permitted.
61. See parallel in Midraš we-Hizhir, Exodus (Leipzig, 1873), p. 244.
62. Usually rendered "the shadow of death."

for the close of the Sabbath is finished [and the Sabbath is over]."

Tinneus Rufus then asked his father's ghost: Why does He do work on the Sabbath? His father's ghost replied: My son, I will give thee an analogy. With whose activities may God's work on the Sabbath be compared? With those of a man who carries things in a courtyard [on the Sabbath. For even though the world have the span of a vast courtyard with innumerable inhabitants, yet for God] it is no more than a span of four cubits, [within which even a man who shares a courtyard with others is permitted to carry things on the Sabbath].⁶³

How could R. Aqiba have spoken as he did to Tinneus Rufus? Does not Scripture say *And on the seventh day He ceased from work and rested* (Exod. 31:17)? R. Phinehas explained in the name of R. Hoshaia: Even though it is written *Because that in it He rested from all His work* (Gen. 2:3), you must understand that the verse means He rested from the work of creating His world, but that He did not rest from [His concern about the] deeds of the righteous or the deeds of the wicked: for He works among the righteous and among the wicked, and makes both the former and the latter see themselves for what they are. Whence do we know that punishing the wicked is called work? Because it is said *The Lord hath opened His armory, and hath brought forth the weapons of His indignation; for it is a work that the Lord God of hosts hath to do* (Jer. 50:25). Whence do we know that the reward [which is wrought] for the righteous is called work? Because it is said *Oh how abundant is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee, which Thou hast wrought for them that take refuge in Thee* (Ps. 31:20).⁶⁴

When Rabbi [Judah] entertained the emperor Antoninus, he would serve him cold dishes on Sabbaths and hot dishes on weekdays. Antoninus used to say: I find the cold dishes more tasty than the hot ones. Rabbi [Judah] would reply: The hot dishes lack one thing. Antoninus said: Can there be anything at all lacking

63. See Maimonides' Code, III, 11, xii, 8 (YJS, 14, 66).

64. See Piska 41.3; Mek, 3, 205; and Malbim on Exod. 31:17.

in the king's pantry? R. [Judah] asked: But how am I to put into weekday dishes the ingredients [of blessing and hallowing, as indicated in the verse] *And God blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it* (Gen. 2:3)?

9. R. Johanan taught in the name of R. Jose the son of R. Hilaifa: As for our father Abraham, Scripture does not testify to his observance of the Sabbath, and it is concluded therefore that he was not permitted unlimited freedom of movement, but was given the Land of Israel with its spatial limits fixed exactly: *Arise, walk through the Land in the length of it and in the breadth of it* (Gen. 13:17). As for our father Jacob, however, Scripture mentions explicitly his observance of the Sabbath, for he imposed upon himself spatial limits for the Sabbath, as is said *He appointed the place of his resting on the outskirts of the city* (Gen. 33:18);⁶⁵ that is to say, he arrived there at sunset [on the eve of the Sabbath] and imposed upon himself spatial limits for the Sabbath. Accordingly he inherited the Land of Israel without fixed limits: *And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south* (Gen. 28:14).

R. Berechiah taught in the name of R. Hiyya bar Abba: The Sabbath was given solely for enjoyment. R. Haggai said in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman: The Sabbath was given solely for the study of Torah. And the two do not differ. What R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Hiyya bar Abba about the Sabbath's being given for enjoyment applies to the disciples of the wise who weary themselves in study of Torah throughout the weekdays, but on the Sabbath come and enjoy themselves. What R. Haggai said in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman about the Sabbath's being given for study of Torah applies to workmen

65. Literally *And encamped before the city*. By appointing a fictive place of rest, one may go on the Sabbath anywhere within a radius of two thousand cubits from that spot. See B. Shab. 118a, where R. Johanan is quoted as saying in the name of R. Jose that he who delights in the Sabbath is given an inheritance which is not circumscribed by boundaries.

who are busy with their work throughout the weekdays, but on the Sabbath come and occupy themselves with the Torah.

R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi: When he who takes delight in the Sabbath asks for something, the Holy One, blessed be He, grants him his petitions. And the proof? *So shalt thou delight thyself in the Lord;*⁶⁶ *and He shall give thee the petitions of thy heart* (Ps. 37:4).

66. In B. Shab 118b, the verse *If thou . . . call the Sabbath a delight* (Isa. 58:11) is cited to prove that delight in the Sabbath is the same as delight in the Lord.

SUMMARY

Honor thy father and thy

mother, the Fifth Commandment

The nations of the earth praised God when they understood how merciful He is in His laws and how willing He is to yield honor due Him from His children, provided children honor their parents (Sec. 1).

The reward for heeding the different precepts is not revealed, for if it were, Israel might pick out the most rewarding precept and heed only that one. There are two precepts in the Torah, however, for whose heeding God revealed the reward: the least onerous—letting the mother bird go; and the most onerous—honoring father and mother. If length of days is the reward for obedience to these precepts, how very much greater must be the reward for our obedience to precepts that may bring about loss of money or even loss of life! As the reward for heeding the aforementioned two precepts is great, so the punishment for not heeding them is great.

The specific meaning of the commandments "honor" and "fear," which son or daughter must heed, is set forth, as well as certain legal matters attendant upon the carrying out of the commandments. The duty of honoring one's father and mother is equal to, and according to some, may even be greater than, the honor due to God Himself.

Anecdotes are told to show how one who gives his father force-fed birds to eat may, nevertheless, inherit Gehenna, while another who sets his father grinding at the mill may, nevertheless, inherit the Garden of Eden. Other anecdotes are told regarding the lengths that R. Tarfon and R. Ishmael went to in honoring their parents. But it was a Geniile, Dama ben Netina, who surpassed all in the honor he accorded his parents. Dama may be said to have followed

1. What is here designated as Piska 23/24 is Piska 23.10-11 in the Breslau edition. But since the theme of the two sections is both different and distinct, I follow Friedmann in giving them a separate designation.

the example of Esau who, it is noted, gave great honor to his father (Sec. 2).

THE FOURTH PARASHAH

[which expounds the Commandment]:

*<Honor thy father and thy mother, that
thy days may be long upon the Land which
the Lord thy God giveth thee (Exod. 20:12).>*

1. *All the kings of the earth praised Thee, O Lord, when they heard the words of Thy mouth* (Ps. 138:4). R. Menahem said: The nations of the earth heard two things from the Holy One, blessed be He, and thereupon they rose up from their thrones and praised Him. When He said, "*And he shall make restitution for that which he hath done amiss in the holy thing* (Lev. 5:16), and no more be done to him," they said: In our codes of law it is set down that any person who eats a forkful of what belongs to the emperor will have the blade of a plow² driven into him. But Israel's Lawgiver declares and requires no more than that *he shall make restitution for that which he hath done amiss in the holy thing*. Indeed, He accounts an offense against a mortal as more serious than one against the All-Highest. Of an offense against the All-Highest it is written *If any one commit a trespass, and sin through error in the holy things of the Lord* (Lev. 5:15), and thus the offender is considered as having committed his sin through error; but of an offense against a mortal it is written *If any one sin, and commit a trespass against the Lord, in that he deal falsely with his neighbor* (Lev. 5:21), and thus the offender is considered as having deliberately dealt falsely. Hence the nations of the earth rose up from their thrones and praised God. But when He said *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2), they said: What king would want anyone to deny him recognition? So, too, the King whom Israel call the Holy One, blessed be He, does not want that any one should deny Him recognition. When He went on to say,

2. So *Mattēnoṭ kēhunnah* on parallel in Num. Rabbah 8:4. David Luria suggests, "he is made to pay double."

Thou shalt have no other gods (Exod. 20:3), they said: For that matter, what king would want to have a partner in his rule? When the Holy One, blessed be He, continued: *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7), they said: For that matter, what king would want people who swear by his name to speak lies? And when the Holy One, blessed be He, said *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Exod. 20:8), they said: For that matter, what king would not want the day of his investiture as king to be honored? Just so the Holy One, blessed be He, wants Israel to honor the Sabbath. But when He uttered the commandment *Honor*, they said: In our codes of law it is set down that he who has himself inscribed by a sacred oath³ as belonging to the king must renounce his parents; but Israel's Lawgiver solemnly declares and requires *Honor thy father and thy mother*. Thereupon they rose up from their thrones and praised the Holy One, blessed be He.

2. *Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life, her ways are moved that thou canst not know them* (Prov. 5:6). R. Abba bar Kahana taught: The words *Lest thou shouldst ponder the path of life* mean that you are not to sit down and carefully ponder the precepts of the Torah, in order to pick out the one precept whose reward is most abundant, and then heed that one alone. Why can you not? Because *her ways are moved*. That is, the ways of [reward in] Torah are removed from man's ken. Consider the analogy, which R. Hiyya taught, of a king who had an orchard into which he brought workmen without revealing to them the reward for planting each of several kinds of trees in the orchard. Had he revealed to them the reward for planting each kind of tree in the orchard,⁴ the workmen would have picked out the kind of tree for whose planting there was the greatest reward and planted it; thus the work of the orchard would have been neglected in one section and not neglected in another section. Even so, concluded R. Abba bar Kahana, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not reveal to Israel the reward for heeding the different pre-

3. See Krauss, *Lehnwörter*, p. 381.

4. "Had he revealed to them . . . tree in the orchard"—Parma MS.

cepts of Torah. Had He revealed it to them, Israel might have picked out the most rewarding precept and heeded only that one. Then the Torah would be neglected at one Section and maintained only at another Section. In other words, according to R. Aḥai, R. Abba bar Kahana was saying: In order to insure that Israel maintain the Torah as a whole, the Holy One, blessed be He, moved out of man's ken in this world the reward given for obedience to particular precepts.⁵

However, there are two precepts in the Torah, as R. Simeon ben Yoḥai taught, for the heeding of which the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed the reward: one of these precepts is the least onerous and the other is the most onerous. The least onerous is: *Thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, but the young thou mayest take unto thyself; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days* (Deut. 22:7); and the most onerous is: *Honor thy father and thy mother . . . that thy days may be long*, etc. (Deut. 5:16). And so R. Abba bar Kahana said: If length of days is the reward for obedience to a precept which commands the paying of a debt,⁶ how very much greater must the reward be for our obedience to precepts in circumstances involving loss of money or even loss of life! Again citing R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, R. Abba bar Kahana concluded: As the reward for heeding these two precepts is great, so the punishment for not heeding them is great. In this connection it is written *The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth [the precept which commands not] taking⁷ the mother [bird away from her fledglings], the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it* (Prov. 30:17). One to pick the eye out and the other to eat it? Exactly! The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let the raven who is cruel come and pick it out without benefiting from it, and let the eagle who is compassionate⁸ come and eat it!

5. By transposing two words, Friedmann suggests "the reward given for obedience to particular positive precepts."

6. For a son is under obligation to his father.

7. The word *lykht*, usually rendered "to obey," is here taken as though spelled *lkht*, "to take." As a matter of fact, the parallel in MhG Exod., p. 423, reads *lkht*, as do some manuscripts of the Book of Proverbs.

8. On the eagle's compassion see Mek, 2, 202.

As to all that is to be observed, guard thy heart, for out of any one of the commandments may be the issues of life (Prov. 4:23).⁹ That is, said R. Isaac, you are to observe everything that I, [the Lord], say to you in the Torah, since you do not know by observance of which commandment you gain life. For, R. Isaac went on to say, there is a command whose reward is close by and there is a command whose reward is put off to the time-to-come. But what is the reward for honoring one's father and mother? Length of life.

<Honor thy father and thy mother (Exod. 20:12).> Elsewhere, in Leviticus, Scripture places the obligation to fear the mother before that of the father;¹⁰ but here in Exodus, in the matter of honor, the father is placed before the mother. R. Joshua of Siknin explained in the name of R. Levi: In the Tent of Meeting, where the nations of the earth could not hear what was said to Israel, Scripture put the obligation to fear the mother before the obligation to fear the father, thus intimating that because the ancestry of the Gentile is traced not through his father [but through his mother, he is under no obligation to fear his father].¹¹ What is meant by "fear"? That the son is not to sit in his father's place, not even stand in it, and that he is not to contradict his father. What is meant by "honor"? That the son is to provide food and drink for his father, that he is to douch, bathe, and anoint him, that he is to put his sandals on for him and to be his escort in all his comings and goings. With whose money is the son expected to do the honoring? It may be done with the old man's money, said Huna bar Hiyya. No, with the son's own money, said the Rabbis. But was there not reported [in the house of study] a

9. IV: *Above all that thou guardest keep thy heart, for out of it are the issues of life.*

10. *Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father* (Lev. 19:3). Parma MS and P: "to fear the father before that of the mother." I follow Friedmann's commendation.

11. But he is obligated to honor his "father," that is, to give him personal services which are considered in the nature of repayment for the care which his "father" had given him. Lev. 19:3 is thus construed as follows: *Every man [is to fear] his mother; but you, [children of Israel—everyone of you] is to fear his father also.*

teaching in opposition to the Rabbis? R. Abbahu was said to have taught in the name of R. Johanan: One can go so far as to say¹² that even if a son is told by his father, "Throw your purse into the sea," the son must obey, [a teaching which would imply that a son must honor his parent no matter what it may cost him]. This teaching, however, has to do only with the special case of a father who has several purses, [with one of which he intends to compensate his son]; hence what the teaching is really concerned with is [not the cost to the son but] the extent to which the son is expected to give peace of mind to his father.

The obligation [to honor one's parents] rests equally on men and women, except of course that men are free to do their parents honor whereas women, [if married] have not the means because they are under the authority of others. But if a woman is a widow or has been divorced, she is considered as one who is free to do her parents honor.

As R. Yannai and R. Jonathan were walking on a promenade,¹³ an old man came and kissed the feet of R. Jonathan. R. Yannai asked: What favor did you do for him in his lifetime¹⁴ that makes him feel obligated to you? R. Jonathan replied: One day he came complaining about his son, and would have me see to it that his son provide for him. I advised him: Bar the door of the synagogue in your son's face,¹⁵ and thus put him to shame. R. Yannai asked: And why did you not compel the son to provide? R. Jonathan replied: Compel by what law? R. Yannai asked: Are you not aware of such a law in Amoraic tradition? Thereupon R. Jonathan reversed himself and in his subsequent teachings in the house of study used to say that the law was as R. Yannai had said. Until R. Jonathan reversed himself, he used

12. At the suggestion of Professor Saul Lieberman the text is read not *ykwł 'fylw* but *ykwł 'ny lw*, the last word being *lwmr* in abbreviated form. Hence, "I may even say," or "one can go so far as to say."

13. See Jastrow, pp. 84 and 98; Parma MS: *'ystdy*, "arcna."

14. For the meaning of the Aramaic *mn ywmy*, cf. *mymyw*, "all his life," in 1 Kings 1:6. I am indebted to Professor Saul Lieberman for bringing this parallel to my attention.

15. See Lieberman, *GJP*, pp. 167-69.

to say that the law, according to Huna bar Hiyā's interpretation of the Baraita, authorized the son to use the father's money. After he reversed himself, in accordance with the Amoraic Rabbis' interpretation of the Baraita, he said that the son was to provide out of his own money for his father.

[In a later generation of Amora'im it turned out that] when R. Jacob bar Aḥa came [to the house of study and cited his master] R. Samuel bar Nahman to the effect that a son is compelled to provide for his father, R. Jacob said that the law accorded with the view of [R. Samuel bar Nahman's master], R. Jonathan.¹⁶

R. Simeon ben Yoḥai taught: Great is the duty of honoring one's father and mother,¹⁷ since the Holy One, blessed be He, made the honor due to parents equal to the honor due to Himself, the fear due to them equal to the fear due to Himself, a curse directed against them equal to a curse directed against Himself, as shown in the verses *Honor thy father*, etc., and *Honor the Lord with thy substance* (Prov. 3:9); the fear due to them as equal to the fear due to Him, as shown in the verses *Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father* (Lev. 19:3); and *Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God* (Deut. 6:13); a curse directed against them as equal to a curse directed against Him, as shown in the verses *And he that curseth his father or his mother, shall surely be put to death* (Exod. 21:17), and *Who-soever curseth his God shall bear his sin* (Lev. 24:15). But with regard to striking one's parents a blow, it is impossible to say, of course, that such a thing can equally be done to God above. Otherwise this idea of equality is logical, in the sense that three—[God, father, and mother]—are equal partners in man. In the presence of R. Hiyā bar Abba, R. Judah bar Dudaṭi

16. The Sages of the Talmud were most scrupulous in transmitting decisions of law in the name of those who made them; and by citing other teachers who were in agreement with the original decision, the Sages of the Talmud felt that they were adding weight and credibility to the transmission of a particular decision.

17. "Great is the . . . and mother"—Parma MS.

analyzed that which R. Simeon ben Yoḥai had taught: Great is the duty of honoring one's father and mother, since the Holy One, blessed be He, set the honor due them above the honor due to Himself. For concerning the honor due to the Holy One, blessed be He, it is written *Honor the Lord with thy substance* (Prov. 3:9). How is one to honor God with one's substance? One sets aside gleanings, the overlooked sheaves, and the corners of the field;¹⁸ [one gives] the first tithe, the second tithe, and the priests' share of the dough; one makes a shofar, a sukkah, and a lulab; one feeds the hungry, gives water to the thirsty, and clothes the naked. In short, if you do have substance, you are obliged to do all these things; but if you have no substance, you are not obliged to do even one of them. When it comes to honoring a father and a mother, however, what does Scripture say? *Honor thy father and thy mother*, etc., even if you have to go about begging at doorways.

R. Ḥanina, companion of scholars,¹⁹ [said]: There is one who gives his father force-fed birds to eat, yet will inherit Gehenna; and there is another who sets his father grinding at the mill, yet will inherit the Garden of Eden. For example, a young man in Sepphoris once stood grinding flour at a time when the authorities issued a work-summons for millers. Said the young man to his old father who was with him: Father, you grind in my stead. Should insults come, I prefer that they fall upon me and not upon you; should blows come, I can stand them, not you.²⁰ And some say that the son herded cattle all around his father, so as to enclose²¹ and hide him. Thus, though he made his father grind at a mill, the son deserved, nevertheless, to inherit the Garden of Eden.

Another young man used to provide force-fed chickens for his father. Once the old man said to the young one: "My son,

18. See Lev. 19:9-10.

19. He was not ordained.

20. In a letter Professor Saul Lieberman suggests the possibility of a play on the word *ʾib*, which may mean "prefer," or "fit for," or "stand." See his *YKF*, p. 107.

21. See Lieberman, *GJP*, p. 168.

where did you get these?" The son replied: "Old man, cat and shut up, even as dogs shut up when they eat." And thus, though he gave his father fat fowl to eat, he inherited Gehenena.

It happened that R. Tarfon's mother went forth on the Sabbath for a walk in her courtyard. When her sandal split [and she could not repair it then and there because it was the Sabbath],²² what did R. Tarfon do? R. Tarfon stretched his hands out under the soles of her feet, and she walked upon his hands until she reached her couch.

Once when R. Tarfon took sick and our Masters came in to visit him, she said to them: Pray for my son R. Tarfon, since he treats me with honor. They asked: In what way? So she told them the story. They said: Even if he did what you say, even did so a thousand thousand times, he still has not come halfway to showing the honor a son owes a parent.

R. Ishmael's mother complained to our Masters about R. Ishmael. She said: Rebuke him—rebuke my son R. Ishmael who does not treat me with honor. Thereupon the faces of our Masters grew pale. They said: Is it possible that R. Ishmael does not treat his parents with honor? And they asked her: Assuming your complaint is just,²³ what does he do? She replied: When he returns from a gathering of scholars and washes his feet, I want to drink the water which he used and he does not let me. The Masters said: Since such is her wish, such shall be the honor her son owes her.

Summing up the matter R. Yannai said: Millers put it well, "The luck of every man is in his own sleeve."²⁴ Thus R. Tarfon's mother spoke of how her son honored her, and she was told: Even if he did so a thousand thousand times more for you, he has not come halfway to showing the honor a son owes a parent.

22. "went forth on the Sabbath . . . because it was the Sabbath"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Tarfon's mother washed her sandals and so had to walk [bare-foot] through his courtyard. What did R. Tarfon do?"
 23. [Perhaps rather "Before we decide whether your complaint is or is not just." L. N.]
 24. That is, what a person gets is of his own choosing. MC and Mah: "in his own fist."

On the other hand, R. Ishmael's mother spoke of how she wanted her son to honor her and she was given the honor she sought.

R. Ze'era in his prayers used to grieve much, saying, "If my mother and father were alive,²⁵ my reward for honoring them would be the Garden of Eden." But after hearing the above-told tales, he said: I thank Thee, O Merciful One, that I have neither father nor mother. I could not have acted like R. Tarfon. And, I must confess, I could not have acted like R. Ishmael.

R. Abun said: I was relieved of the obligation to honor father or mother. In explanation of his statement it should be said that after his mother conceived him, his father died, and after he was born, his mother died.

R. Abbahu taught in the name of R. Johanan that when R. Eliezer was asked, "How far is one to go in honoring one's father and mother?" he replied: "Let you and me ask Dama ben Netina." Dama ben Netina was the head of the city fathers. One time, when his mother came in and berated²⁶ him in the presence of the council over which he presided, he did not even say to her: "Enough, mother." Moreover, when her sandal, [with which she was hitting him], fell from her hand, he put his hand down and gave the sandal back to her so that she should not get further upset.

R. Hizkiah said: There was a heathen in Ashkelon, and he was the head of the city fathers. Yet the stone upon which his father sat, he never presumed to sit on. And when his father died, he had the stone made into an idol.

One time the jasper, the precious stone representing the Tribe of Benjamin [in the breastplate of the High Priest],²⁷ was lost. So the Sages asked: "Who has a precious stone like it?" and were told, "Dama ben Netina has." Thereupon they went [to him] and agreed on a purchase price of one hundred denar. He went upstairs, because he wanted to fetch it for them, and found his father and mother asleep. Some say his father's feet were upon

25. Evidently they died before R. Ze'era was old enough to be able to honor them.

26. Parma MS: "hit."

27. See Exod. 28:15-20, and Rashi.

the box in which the jasper lay. Some say the key to the box was in his father's fingers. He went down to the Sages and said: I cannot give it to you. They said to one another: "Maybe he wants more money," and decided among themselves to raise the price to a thousand denar. When his father and mother awoke, he went up and brought the jasper down to the Sages. They were about to give him the larger sum they had decided on, but he said: What, shall I sell you the honor due to one's father and mother for money? I will not take any kind of profit as a reward for honoring my parents.

How did the Holy One, blessed be He, reward Dama ben Netina? R. Jose bar Abin said: That very night a cow of his gave birth to a red heifer, and the Sages of Israel measured out to him its weight in gold, which he received as the price of the heifer.

R. Shabbethai applied to him the verse *Judgment for plenteous mercy He doth not delay* (Job 37:23); that is, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not delay in this world the reward of those among the heathen who do deeds of mercy. Of this reward it is written *And repayeth them that hate Him to their face*, etc. (Deut. 7:10).

*Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel, and after honor take me up*²⁸ (Ps. 73:24). R. Judah ben Betera taught: *Thou wilt guide me with Thy counsel*—guide me, that is, with the counsel of Torah. *And after honor take me up*, that is, [after rewarding Esau] for the great honor that he gave to his parents, Thou wilt take us up [out of exile in Esau's midst]. R. Nehunya, citing R. Tanhūm bar Yudan, commented in agreement: In this world what delayed the honor due to Jacob? The great honor which Esau gave to his father.²⁹

28. IV: *and afterward receive me with glory*.

29. Or perhaps R. Nehunya interpreted the word *honor* as though it occurred twice in the verse: After paying the honor due to Esau, Thou wilt take me up to honor.

With regard to dual interpretation of a word see Tosafot on B.B.M. 61a. On the passage see Exod. R. Rabbah 45:5, and Mah. I am indebted to Professor Saul Lieberman for the explanation and the references.

〈In reference to the way Esau honored his father, R. Simeon ben Gamaliel said:〉 I, when I used to wait on my father, waited on him in soiled garments; but when I went abroad, I went forth in comely garments, so that in the market place I walked about perfumed. Esau, however, when he waited on his father, waited on him in royal garments, as it is written *The choicest garments of Esau her elder son which were with her*³⁰ (Gen. 27:15)—and by *choicest* royal garments are meant. For Esau used to say, “My father is worthy of being waited on in royal garments.”

30. Presumably the choice garments stayed at home to be used by Esau when he waited on his father.

PISKA 24

SUMMARY

The Sixth Commandment, and
the rest

The commandment *Thou shalt not murder* means also "Thou shalt not murder thyself." Sheol has two regions, an inner and an outer, and hence if a man's life is taken without God's permission, as by suicide or murder, his soul must finish in the outer regions of Sheol the remainder of the years he was to live on earth (Sec. 1).

The commandment not to commit adultery implies that one is not to enjoy even the perfume of another man's wife. Violation of the Seventh Commandment causes God's wrath to fall upon the world. Not only is he who uses his body in the act called an adulterer; even the man whose eye is anticipating the act of adultery is referred to in Scripture as an adulterer. In order to expose the adulterer, God limns the adulterer's features in the embryo's likeness, even though the embryo is the result of the union of husband and wife. Adulterers mar God's image in an embryo and weaken the power of the Creator. Indeed, God, the third partner in the making of a child, suffers the loss while the two transgressors benefit.

The chaste man who sees a naked part of a woman's body and refrains from feasting his eyes upon it earns the right to behold the face of the Presence (Sec. 2).

With regard to the commandment *Thou shalt not steal*, it is demonstrated that poverty leads to more grievous sin than riches. As for the commandment *Thou shalt not bear false witness*, it is said that God created everything in the world, but He did not create the stuff of falsehood.

Finally, with regard to the commandment *Thou shalt not covet*, it is stated that if it were not for Israel's covetousness, Israel would not have been banished from their Land (Sec. 3).

The Sixth Commandment, [and the rest]

1. *Thou shalt not murder* (Exod. 20:13) means also "Thou shalt not murder thyself: thou shalt not cause thy own blood to cry out bloody murder against thee."¹ Consider the story of a woman who had two sons, one of whom rose up and slew his brother. What did she do? She took some of the dead man's blood and put it in a flask. As long as the blood kept bubbling, she knew that the murderer was alive somewhere, but as soon as it was still, she knew that the murderer was dead.²

R. Abba bar Kahana taught: Sheol has two gates, an inner and an outer. Whenever a man's life is taken without God's permission, [as by suicide or murder], his soul must finish out in the outer regions of Sheol the remainder of the years he was to live. That Sheol has more than one gate, [that is, several regions], is intimated in the verse *I said: In the noontide of my days I shall go, even to the gates of Sheol; there I shall have counted for me the remainder of my days* (Isa. 38:10).³ The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Whosoever slays another robs Me [of My good name], making Me out to be a cruel God [who permits murder]. Hence *Thou shalt not murder*.

2. *Thou shalt not commit adultery* (Exod. 20:13). Thou shalt not let thy nose enjoy⁴ [even the perfume of one who is not thy wife].

Thou shalt not commit adultery. Thou shalt not cause God's wrath to fall upon the world.⁵

Thou shalt not commit adultery. R. Simeon ben Lakish said:

1. Here there is a play on *ršh*, "murder," and, by metathesis, *šrh*, "cry out." So David Luria and Mah, who are sustained by Parma MS.

2. But a suicide's blood can never be stilled, because a suicide is both victim and murderer.

3. Cf. B.Ḥag 5a.

4. Here there is a play on the word *tn'f*, "commit adultery," and *šnh' f*, "let the nose enjoy." Cf. Maimonides' Code, V, 1, xxi, 2 (YJS, 16, 133).

5. Here the play is *tn'f*, "commit adultery," and *tn' f*, "cause wrath."

You are not to say that only⁶ he is called adulterer who uses his body in the act. We find Scripture saying that even he who visualizes himself in the act of adultery is called adulterer. And the proof? The verse *The eye also of the adulterer waiteth for the twilight, saying: "No eye shall see me"* (Job 24:15). [Here the man whose eye is anticipating the act of adultery is referred to as adulterer in advance of the act].

The verse goes on to say *But [He that dwelleth] in the secret place hides his face*⁷ (*ibid.*). The eye of an adulterer keeps anticipating: *In the twilight, in the evening of the day, in the blackness of night and the darkness* (Prov. 7:9), when he finally commits the act, he does not know that He who dwells in the secret place of the world makes it His special care to hide the adulterer's features in the embryo's likeness—an exact likeness of him, in order to expose him as an adulterer.

With reference to God's action in this matter,⁸ Job said to God: *Is it good that Thou shouldst defraud?* (Job 10:3). This one, [the husband], feeds and maintains her; but Thou takest special care to hide the embryo's features in the likeness of another, with whom the wife has gone and sinned, so that the embryo within her is marred. The text goes on to say, *That Thou shouldst despite the work of Thy hands?* (*ibid.*)—that is, after Thou didst shape the embryo forty whole days in the image of the husband, Thou returnest to mar it with the likeness of the adulterer. *And shine upon the counsel of the wicked?* (*ibid.*). Does it befit Thy dignity to act as a kind of go-between for the adulterer and the adulteress? The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Thou speakest as if thou wert the paid spokesman of the adulterer. Wouldst thou have people say to Me, even as thou

6. "You are not to say that only"—Parma MS.

7. IV: *And he putteth a covering on his face.*

8. Even after a woman is made pregnant by her husband, the features of the embryo may still resemble an adulterer's face if within the first 40 days of pregnancy from her husband she has relations with an adulterer. See Num. Rab-
bah 9:1.

didst say, *Thou hast eyes of flesh, Thou seest only as man seeth* (Job 10:4)? Hence I limn the adulterer's features in the embryo, an exact likeness of him, in order to expose him as an adulterer.

R. Levi said: In this connection we can cite the parable of a potter's apprentice who stole a lump of the potter's clay and whose master detected the theft. What did the master do? He proceeded to make the lump of clay into a vessel which he set before the apprentice. Why all this? To make it known to the apprentice that the master had detected his theft. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I shall limn the adulterer's features in the embryo's, an exact likeness of him, in order to expose him as an adulterer.

R. Judah bar Simon taught in the name of R. Levi ben Peraṭa: *The Artist who begot thee thou dost weaken*⁹ (Deut. 32:18). You adulterers weaken the power of the Creator. Consider as illustration the parable of an artist who was limning with special care the features of a sovereign. Even as he was limning them carefully, someone came and said to him: There has been a change of sovereigns. At once the artist's hands grew slack. He said: Whose features am I now to limn? That of the first sovereign or that of the second? Like the artist, the Holy One, blessed be He, occupied Himself with limning the features of the embryo during the entire first forty days of the woman's pregnancy; then at the end of forty days she went and sinned and thus changed the nature of her pregnancy. Hence the hands of the Lord¹⁰ grew slack, if one dare say such a thing. He said: Whose features am I now to limn? Those of him who possessed her first, or him who possessed her second? Hence *The Artist who begot thee thou dost weaken* (tšy)—that you weaken the power of the Creator is suggested by the fact that the [first letter in God's name], the *yod* at the end of tšy, is minuscule, the only such

9. JV: *Of the Rock that begot thee thou wast unmindful*. The word *šwr*, "rock," may be taken, however, as a form of *šyyr*, "artist"; and tšy, "thou wast unmindful," may be taken as a form of tšš, "weaken."

10. Literally "Place."

instance in Scripture. [In his comment on the diminutive *yod*, R. Isaac said: In all other transgressions we find, for instance, that the thief gains, while the victim of the theft loses; the robber gains, while his victim loses. In adultery, however, both transgressors benefit. Who loses? [God], the third [partner in the making of a child], suffers the loss. The Holy One, blessed be He, loses, if one dare say such a thing, for [in order to expose adultery] He destroys the elements [He used to establish the original paternity of the embryo].¹¹

R. Meyasha the son of the son of R. Joshua ben Levi taught: He who sees a naked part of a woman and refrains from feasting his eyes upon it earns the right to behold the face of the Presence. And the proof? The verse *And shutteth his eyes from looking upon evil* [Isa. 33:15]. And what does the verse go on to say? *He shall dwell on high; his place of defense shall be the munitions of rocks . . . thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty* [Isa. 33:16-17].

3. *Thou shalt not steal*. Concerning this commandment R. Eleazar put a question to R. Hanina, but some say it was R. Hanina who put the question to <R. Eleazar.¹²> But is it possible that the master of R. Hanina should be seeking an answer from his pupil? The fact is that he put the question to R. Eleazar only to test him by means of the following passage. He asked: What is meant by the verse *Two things have I asked of Thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches . . . lest I be full and deny Thee, and say: "Who is the Lord?" Or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God* (Prov. 30:7-9). Tell, if you will, which leads to the more grievous sin—riches or poverty? R. Eleazar replied: Both lead to grievous sin. R. Hanina persisted: Still, which of the two leads to the more grievous sin? R. Eleazar replied: The second. R. Hanina then asked him: How

11. Cf. Piska 21:17.

12. Parma MS: "R. Hanina"; P: "R. Akiba."

can you prove [that when two things are mentioned, the second is regarded as more important than the first]? R. Eleazar replied: [By analogy with a passage in Ezekiel], where we find that the Holy One, blessed be He, put idolatry in Israel first as the lesser of two transgressions, saying: *Go ye, serve every one his idols* (Ezek. 20:39); and then went on to stress as a greater transgression sacrifices to God on high places outside of Jerusalem, saying *But My holy name shall ye no more profane, for in My holy mountain . . . saith the Lord God, there shall all the house of Israel, all of them, serve Me* (Ezek. 20:40). In short, the verse, in its insistence that under no circumstances were sacrifices to God to be made on high places (*bamoṭ*), [shows that when two matters are presented the second is to be considered as weightier than the first].

<Concerning the ban on high places, R. Jose bar Ḥanina said: A high place may be used for sacrifices only on the word of God as uttered through a prophet. And the proof? Scripture says, *Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest; but in the place which the Lord shall choose* (Deut. 12:13-14). So in explanation of the fact that at a time when sacrifices on high places were already banned, Elijah offered sacrifices [every day on Mount Carmel],> R. Simlai said that the word of God commanded Elijah to do so, for he declared *I have done all these things at Thy word* (1 Kings 18:36).

*Thou shalt not bear false witness*¹³ (Exod. 20:13). R. Samuel bar Naḥman said: We find that the Holy One, blessed be He, created everything in His world; only the stuff of falsehood He did not create, only the measure of falsehood He did not fashion. Out of their own hearts did mortals conceive false words, as is said *Conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood* (Isa. 59:13).

Thou shalt not covet (Exod. 20:14). R. Huna taught: We find

13. The concluding words of this verse, *against thy neighbor*, will be taken to mean "against thy God," imputing to Him things, such as lies, which He did not bring into being.

that Israel would not have been banished from their Land if they had not transgressed the verse *They cover fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away* (Micah 2:2).¹⁴ *And all the people perceived the thunders* (Exod. 20:15).¹⁵

The end of the Ten Commandments

14. Very likely the proof of what befalls Israel as a result of transgressing the command *Thou shalt not covet* is from the rest of the verse in Micah, which may be read: *They oppress a man and [wrest away] his wife, whereby they wrest away the Divine Being from His inheritance*. An apt illustration of the consequences of covetousness is the story of a carpenter's apprentice who coveted that the master send his wife to get the money. So the master sent his wife to the apprentice and she stayed with him for three days. The apprentice succeeded in deceiving his master about his wife's infidelity, and at the same time persuaded him to divorce his wife. Whereupon the apprentice married the woman, and had the effrontery to engage his former master as servant at a banquet which he—the apprentice—gave. The master's tears falling into the cups served to his former apprentice and to his former wife sealed the fate of Jerusalem (see B.Git 58a).
15. The verse is added in order to conclude the chapter on a joyous note.

it serves as God's reproach of the angels that, while visiting Abraham, in all too human fashion they violated the Law when they ate milk and meat together. At this point, while the angels were taken aback by God's reproach, He told Moses to write down quickly the Ten Commandments. Thus juxtaposition in Scripture even of passages apparently unrelated in meaning, has both purpose and significance (Sec. 3).

*Tithe, and then thou shalt again
tithe,¹ all the increase of thy seed, that
which is brought forth in the field year
by year (Deut. 14:22).²*

1. Let our master instruct us: May a basket which contains produce from which the tithe has not yet been taken be carried on the Sabbath? Our Masters taught as follows: Produce known as *demai*, that is, produce from which it is doubtful that the tithe has been taken; produce that the lay Israelite has set aside for the priests and is ritually clean; and produce from the Levite's tithe, one tenth of which has been set aside for the priests—all these may be carried on the Sabbath. But produce that has not been tithed; produce that the lay Israelite has set aside for the priests but is not ritually clean; produce that is the Levite's tithe, from which the priests' tenth has not yet been set aside—these may not be carried on the Sabbath. Note that you are permitted to carry the priests' share on the Sabbath, but not the Levite's tithe from which the priests' tenth has not yet been taken. Since this tithe may not be eaten until the priests' tenth has been taken from it, it is forbidden to carry the tithe. Produce that the lay Israelite has set aside for the priests and is ritually clean may be

1. EV: *Thou shalt surely tithe*. But such a translation glides over a redundancy in verbs, one which the commentator will fully exploit.

2. On Pentecost the usual lesson in Scripture is Deut. 16:9-12; but when Pentecost fell on a Sabbath the lesson used to begin with Deut. 14:22, with the injunction concerning tithing the crop, the principal observance linked with the day. See Friedmann's n. 1, and *Maḡen Abraham* on 'Orah ḥayyim, p. 494.

carried on the Sabbath, because the priests who eat the produce are permitted to eat it on the Sabbath.³

Now a man is required to make his produce legally fit for his own use by first setting aside what is due to others; and to avoid any doubts he should not leave any untithed produce in his house. For towards dusk on every Sabbath eve one of the three things a man is required to say to his household is "Have you tithed?" Then he asks: "Have you prepared the '*erub*'?" and "Have you kindled the lamp?"⁴ Hence it follows that even as a man is under the obligation of kindling the Sabbath lamp, so must he be heedful of the tithes. It is prohibited to carry on the Sabbath not only the Levite's tithe from which the priests' tenth has not been taken; it is also prohibited to carry fruits from which the portions due to others have not yet been set aside. If [before the Sabbath] a man brought in fruits from the field, [intending to have no more than a snack],⁵ but did not set aside either the portion due to the priests or the tithes, he may not, on the Sabbath, touch the fruits nor carry them till he has set aside the tithes—the first tithe as well as the second tithe. [In the six-year cycle of tithing], the first tithe is the one given to the priests and to the Levites;⁶ the second tithe is the one set aside on the first year, the second year, the fourth year, and the fifth year; however, that portion of it [which it is irksome] to take to Jerusalem to be consumed there by the pilgrims is redeemed with money; but the tithe of the third and the sixth year is given to the poor. And whence, from what lesson in Torah, do we know that a man is required to set aside two tithes out of the harvest—a first tithe and a second tithe? From what is read in the lesson of the day, *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe*.

3. See Shab 18:1.

4. "Have you kindled the lamp?"—Parma MS; PE: "Kindle the lamp."

5. Ordinarily untithed fruit may be consumed as a snack. But on the Sabbath no meal is considered incidental—every meal is important. See B.Beṣ 34b.

6. The Levites who received the tithe from lay Israelites had, in their turn, to give one-tenth of it to the priests. For a detailed account of the law of the tithes see *The Mishnah: Beraḳoth, Peah, Demai*, ed. Harry Fischel Institute (New York, 5707/1947), *Demai*, Introduction, pp. iii–iv.

2. *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe.* Concerning this verse, R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: This verse is to be considered in the light of the words *Honor the Lord with thy substance* (Prov. 3:9), [that is, with what the Lord has bestowed upon thee].⁷ Thereby the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: I do not say to thee, Honor Me out of thine, but out of Mine. Honor the Lord from whatever substance He has bestowed upon thee. Thou art only My steward. If I have given thee anything, and there is anything of Mine in thy hand, honor Me with a portion of that which is Mine.

And thus Scripture says, *Who hath given Me anything beforehand, that I should repay him?* (Job 41:3). Whatever man circumcised his son in My name before I gave him a child? Whoever made a mezuzah or built a parapet⁸ for Me before I gave him a house? Whoever set aside the first-born or the first of the shearing before I gave him a flock? Whoever made a prayer shawl with fringes before I gave him a garment?⁹ Whoever sang a song to Me before I performed miracles for him? [I put these questions to you] lest you say He multiplies commandments for us. And the Holy One, blessed be He, went on: I have not asked for a portion of that which is yours; I have asked for a portion of that which is Mine. I said to thee that thou art to bring Me an offering. In order that it be not said I have asked of thee what is thine, behold what I have written for thee to give: *A bullock, or a sheep, or a goat* (Lev. 22:27). When art thou to bring it as an offering? Only after I give it to thee—that is, *When [it] is brought forth (ibid.)*.

Likewise I said to thee *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe*. Now in order that it may not be said that I have asked of thee what is thine, behold what I have written for thee: *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe, all the increase of thy seed* (Deut. 14:22). When? After I have first given thee *that which is brought*

7. A play on *hnnk*, "bestowed upon thee," and *hwnk*, "the substance given thee."

8. See Deut. 22:8.

9. Parma MS and P: "wisdom." An anonymous glossator of Parma MS suggests: "Whoever made fringes for Me before I gave him a garment?"

forth in the field year by year (ibid.). Hence when thou honorest the Holy One, blessed be He, with a gift which, in truth, He had first given thee, thou honorest Him not out of thy substance but out of His.

Honor the Lord with thy substance (Prov. 3:9)—that is, from what He has bestowed upon thee.¹⁰ He gave thee a son—circumcise him. He gave thee a house—make a mezuzah and build a parapet. He gave thee a courtyard—make a sukkah. He gave thee a flock—set aside the firstlings and the first of the shearing. He gave thee cattle—do not sin in the use of them, but obey the commandments that thou plow not with an ox and an ass together, nor let thy cattle gender with a diverse kind.¹¹ He gave thee gold and silver—do deeds of charity with them. *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe, all* (Deut. 14:22). What is implied by the word *all*? Tithe thy money too.

R. Simeon ben Lakish said in the name of R. Judah ben Hanina: In Usha it was voted that a man should set aside a fifth of his possessions for charity. Why a fifth? In order to provide an amount equal to that which [formerly] was set aside for the priests and for the tithes.¹²

A story of king Monbaz¹³ who gave away his money to the poor. His brothers sent word to him, saying: What your fathers accumulated, you are giving away. He replied: My fathers accumulated in this world, while I accumulated good deeds which give me a return in this world, but whose principal endures in the world-to-come. My fathers accumulated for the world below, while I accumulated for the world above: *In the presence of the Lord thy God that which thou givest away as charity will be thine*¹⁴ (Deut. 24:13). And therefore *The wise in heart will take along deeds of mercy* (Prov. 10:8).

10. See above, n. 7.

11. See Deut. 22:10; Lev. 19:19.

12. The portion due to the priests is about two per cent, and the two tithes a little less than 20 per cent.

13. King of Adiabene in the first century who became a convert. In what follows there is a play on his name, *Monbaz* = *baz* [ma]mon, "gives away money."

14. JV: *And it shall be righteousness before the Lord thy God.*

And he that is wise winneth [treasures given to] souls [in the world-to-come] (Prov. 11:30). A story of R. Tarfon who gave R. 'Aqiba a hundred and eighty hundredweights of gold, saying to him, "Buy us an estate." R. 'Aqiba went away and did many deeds of charity with the money. After a time he returned to R. Tarfon who asked him: "What have you accomplished? Is the estate which you got for us a handsome one?" He replied, "Yes, and there is none of like excellence in the world." "But where is the deed of sale?" R. 'Aqiba replied: It is in the hands of David: *He hath scattered abroad, he hath given to the needy; his charity endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted in honor* (Ps. 112:9). That is to say, in this world, *his horn shall be exalted in honor*; and in the world-to-come *his charity endureth for ever*.

Hence, *Honor the Lord with thy substance* (Prov. 3:9)—from what He has bestowed upon thee.¹⁵ *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty* (Prov. 3:10)—that is, thy barns shall be filled with plenty in the world-to-come.

[Taking the verse to mean that thou art to *honor the Lord with whatever excellence He hath bestowed upon thee*, give heed to] the story of one who had many possessions, but whose disposition was so evil that in all his days he gave no charity. One day he lost the wits that God had bestowed upon him, seized a flaming brand and set his houses on fire, took his silver and gold and cast them into the sea, grabbed an axe and shattered the vessels in which his beverages were stored. What caused him to act in this way? The fact that while he still had his wits¹⁶ he did not honor the Lord.

Another comment on *Honor the Lord with whatever excellence He hath bestowed upon thee*: If you are a man with good looks, do not go astray after harlotry, but honor your Maker and fear Him and praise Him with the good looks He has bestowed upon you. *Honor the Lord with whatever excellence He hath bestowed*

15. See above, n. 7.

16. Since the latter part of the verse commands honoring the Lord with the first fruits of one's increase, the command to honor Him with one's substance is regarded as superfluous. Hence in this comment the word *hwn* is taken to mean "wits." See Lieberman, *GJP*, p. 175.

upon thee. With your voice, for example: if your voice is good and you are seated in a synagogue, rise up and honor the Lord with your voice.

Ḥiyya, the son of R. Eliezer haḳ-Ḳappar's sister, had a good voice, and so R. Eliezer haḳ-Ḳappar would say to him: Ḥiyya, my son, rise up and honor the Lord with that which He has bestowed upon you.

Naboth had a good voice, and when he would come up to Jerusalem, all Israel would gather to hear his voice [in song]. The one time he did not make the pilgrimage, the witnesses [suborned by Jezebel], vile rogues, testified against him and he perished out of the world. What brought about his downfall? The fact that he did not go up to Jerusalem and make his appearance as a pilgrim to honor the Lord with what He had bestowed upon him. Indeed the Torah gives assurance: *Neither shall any man covet thy land* (Exod. 34:24). When does this assurance hold? *When thou goest up to appear before the Lord thy God three times in the year* (*ibid.*). Had Naboth gone up, he would not have lost his life because [of Ahab's] coveting of his vineyard.¹⁷

Another comment: *Honor the Lord with thy substance.* That is, said R. Eliezer, Honor your Physician even before you have need of Him.¹⁸

Honor the Lord with thy substance. If He has given you a field, set aside the tithe. And if you have done this, *So shall thy barns be filled with plenty* (Prov. 3:10). Moses said to the children of Israel: Since abundance follows upon the giving of tithes, take care to set aside the tithes so that abundance comes to the world.

3. *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe* (Deut. 14:22). What does Scripture say directly before this verse? *Thou shalt not see the a kid in its mother's milk.* Citing R. Isaac,¹⁹ R. Tanḥuma began

17. See 1 Kings 21.

18. Cf. Exod. Rabbah 21:7. R. Eliezer thus advises a man to do the right thing, lest accusing angels in heaven all join against him, and he will have to fall back on the Physician's, that is God's, mercy.

19. "Citing R. Isaac"—Parma MS.

his discourse as follows: *The earth also acts hypocritically under*²⁰ [the feet of] the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, violated the statutes, broken the everlasting covenant (Isa. 24:5). Why does Scripture say *The earth also acts hypocritically under* [the feet of] the inhabitants thereof, etc.? The earth acts hypocritically towards her inhabitants because they act hypocritically towards one another. For example? The priest walks out with the owner to his barn and asks for something of the portion due him. But the owner says hypocritically: "My dear sir, come another time, and we shall go into the house and I will give you your portion." Should the priest happen to be standing with the owner in the city, the owner says to him: "My dear sir, today, as it happens, your portion is in the barn"—so that finally the priest, put to shame by the owner, asks no more.

Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, says: "As thou livest, because thou spakest hypocritically, with such phrases as 'this day as it happens,' or 'not in the house,' or 'to the field,' and didst send him away empty-handed, so shall I recompense thee. This day of the winter thou seest thy field hath grown so that the plants are heavy with ears of corn. Nevertheless thou art in My power. What will I do to thee? I will cause the kernels to ripen [prematurely] in their mothers' wombs, and the east wind will come and parch them, [leaving empty husks]." Hence, *The earth also acts hypocritically under* [the feet of] the inhabitants thereof.²¹ What brings it about that the kernels ripen prematurely in their mothers' wombs? The fact that you do not pay out the tithes. *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe, all the increase of thy seed.* Why? *So that the kid be not seethed in its mother's milk* (Deut. 14:21), [that is, so that the kernels be not parched on the cob].

Another comment: *The earth also acts hypocritically under* [the feet of] the inhabitants thereof, etc. (Isa. 24:5). Scripture does not go on to say, "because they violated the law," but *because they violated the laws*, that is the law of the first tithe and the law of the second tithe. The text goes on to say, *violated the statute*,

20. JV: *is defiled because.*

21. Cf. Job 34:26; empty, like the owner's promises.

broken the everlasting covenant. What is meant by *broken the everlasting covenant*? The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the children of Israel: You have broken the covenant of your fathers—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—[the covenant] of your fathers who of their own accord set aside tithes. Abraham set aside the first tithe: *And he gave [Melchizedek . . . priest of God the most high] a tenth of all* (Gen. 14:20). Isaac set aside the first portion owed to the priests:²² *And Isaac sowed in that land, and found in the same year a hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him* (Gen. 26:12). Rabbi Isaac²³ said: Wherever there is a blessing in Scripture, reference is never made to any definite quantity, and yet here the text says, *a hundredfold, and the Lord blessed him*. Hence from the reference to a definite quantity it follows that Isaac must have been reckoning out the amount of grain he had in order to set aside the first portion owed to the priests. And Jacob set aside the first tithe and also²⁴ the second tithe. Whence does this conclusion follow? From the verse, R. Huna said in the name of R. Aḥa, *Of all that Thou shalt give me—a tithe, and then I will again tithe, because of Thee* (Gen. 28:22). R. Judah bar Simon said in the name of R. Judah bar Il'a'i:²⁵ Your fathers—I blessed them only through the merit of tithes: *And Abraham was old, well stricken in age; and the Lord had blessed Abraham because [he tithed] ALL things* (Gen. 24:1). And I blessed Isaac who said: *I have eaten only [after tithing] ALL* (Gen. 27:33). And I blessed Jacob too who said: *Because ALL I have, [I tithed]* (Gen. 33:11).²⁶ Hence Moses said: Since your fathers were blessed and merited

22. The *tērumah gēdolah*, which being one-fiftieth of the crop (see Ter 4:5) is measured in hundredths. Hence in the verse which states that the Lord blessed Isaac's crops a hundredfold, the commentator finds the hint that Isaac set apart the first portion owed to the priests.

23. "Isaac"—Parma MS.

24. "the first tithe and also"—Parma MS.

25. "R. Judah bar Simon said in the name of R. Judah bar Il'a'i"—Parma MS and MC; PE: "R. Simon son of R. Judah son of R. Simon said in the name of R. Jose son of R. Il'a'i."

26. See Tanḥuma B, *Hayye Sarah*, 6. The term *all* is regarded as intimating property from which tithe had to be taken. The key verse is *And he gave him a tenth of all* (Gen. 14:20), that is, Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek.

their greatness in the world only by virtue of their tithing, you too take care to pay out the tithes. *Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe.*

Another comment: *Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe* (Deut. 14:21–22). R. Judah the son of R. Simon said: The verse concerning the seething of a kid in its mother's milk is found three times in Scripture: the first time when it is said *The choicest first fruits of thy land . . . thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Behold I send an angel* (Exod. 23:19–20); the second time when it is said *The choicest first fruits of thy land . . . thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk. And the Lord said unto Moses: Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words* (Exod. 34:26–27); and the third time when it is said *For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk. Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe* (Deut. 14:21–22).²⁷ Now the first time the verse clearly intends to prohibit mixing meat with milk. But why a second time? Because when the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to give the Torah, the ministering angels in the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, began throwing stones²⁸ at the idea, saying: *What is man that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man that Thou thinkest of him?* (Ps. 8:5). *O Lord, our Lord, how glorious is Thy name in all the earth; how great Thy praise if Thy majesty [of Torah] be extended only to the heavens above*²⁹ (Ps. 8:2). According to R. Aḥa, the angels said to God: It would truly be to Thy praise if Thou didst extend Thy majesty only to the heavens above—that is, if Thou gavest Thy Torah to us only. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: My Torah cannot remain with you. It would not be appropriate for it to remain in a realm of creatures who have

27. The passage beginning "R. Judah the son of R. Simon said: The verse concerning the seething of a kid" and ending with "*Tithe, and then thou shalt again tithe*" is in Parma MS.

28. So emended in MC and David Luria: *ptkyn*, "stones," instead of *pyrkym*.

29. JV: *whose majesty is rehearsed above the heavens*. But the commentator takes 'sr not in the sense of "whose," but as a form of the verb "go straight, advance, be great."

[eternal] life. Take note of the parable of a king whose son's fingers were no more than stumps. The king took his son to a master weaver for instruction in the weaving of silk, but when the weaver saw the boy, he said to the king: Go and teach your son a craft more appropriate for him. For the very nature of my craft requires fingers first and foremost—and yet you would have one whose fingers are no more than stumps taught the weaving of silk!

Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: Why are you rising in protest,³⁰ saying *How great Thy praise if Thy majesty [of Torah] be extended only to the heavens above?* It would be entirely inappropriate for the Torah to remain with you. Why? Because it states *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2). Do you ever deny My kingship [as man sometimes does]? Are you not with Me and do you not see the likeness of My image every day [as man does not]? The Torah speaks further of *When a man dieth in a tent* (Num. 19:14). Do you die? Again the Torah states *These may ye eat* (Lev. 11:9), and *These shall ye not eat* (Lev. 11:4). Do you eat or drink? Why then should you wish that I give My Torah to you?

What action did the Holy One, blessed be He, then take? Without further ado He dismissed the angels and gave the Torah to Israel. But forty days later when Israel denied the command *Thou shalt have no other gods* (Exod. 20:3), the angels proceeded to speak up to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the universe, didn't we tell Thee so? Didn't we tell Thee not to give the Torah to them?" Hence when the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to inscribe the Commandments a second time, the angels would not let Him. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Are you the ones who fulfill the Torah? A scarcely weaned infant in Israel fulfills it more scrupulously than you. Even when he gets out of school, if meat and milk are both at hand for him to consume, he never drinks the milk until he has washed his hands of the meat. Yet when you were sent [down from heaven] to Abraham, he brought milk and meat to you at the same time, and you

30. "in protest"—Parma MS.

ate both together, as is said *And he took curd, and milk, and the calf which he had dressed, and set it before them; and he stood by them under the tree; and they did eat* (Gen. 18:8). And as soon as the Holy One, blessed be He, put the angels off with this rejoinder, the Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say to Moses: While the hour is free of their demurrals, *Write thou these words, for after the tenor of these words*, etc. (Exod. 34:26-27)—that is to say, after the tenor of [God's reproach to the angels] concerning their violation of the precept *Thou shalt not seethe a kid in its mother's milk*.

It was with this very verse that R. Azariah began his discourse and averred: *All His commandments are sure . . . They stand conjoined for ever and ever; they are done in truth and uprightness* (Ps. 111:7-8).

SUMMARY

Nebuchadnezzar's siege
and capture of Jerusalem

Jeremiah was one of four men referred to in Scripture as supremely perfect creatures whom God Himself had formed. At his coming forth into the world, Jeremiah knew that he was to announce Jerusalem's destruction to the whole world. His pleas to God to be relieved of this task proving of no avail, he cursed and reviled the day on which he was born. Jeremiah, who prophesied in the city squares, was one of three Prophets in his generation, the other two being Zephaniah and Huldah (Sec. 1/2).

Jeremiah's connection with Nebuchadnezzar commenced on the day he began to prophesy. The circumstances were these: At the time of the first exile, Nebuchadnezzar's compassion turned toward Israel, and he appointed Mattaniah of the family of Jeconiah as ruler, ominously renamed him Zedekiah, and then had him swear loyalty by a Scroll of the Law.

Nevertheless, Zedekiah rebelled, and when the Chaldeans came against him, Jeremiah told Zedekiah not to depend on Pharaoh's promises of help, for the Chaldeans would capture the city (Sec. 3). Then on his way to Anathoth to partake with his fellow-priests of the portion due him as a priest, Jeremiah was arrested by the grandson of a false prophet whom he had once exposed. Jeremiah was charged with going over to the Chaldeans and was thrown into a dungeon from which presently, on Zedekiah's orders, he was removed to the court of the guard (Sec. 4). Subsequently, further charges were made against him, and he was put into a pit full of water in which he stayed alive by a miracle God performed in his behalf. When Ebed-Melech heard that Jeremiah was alive, he obtained Zedekiah's permission to bring him up out of the pit. By that time the famine in Jerusalem had so weakened the population that thirty

men together had barely strength enough to bring him up out of the pit (Sec. 5) and into the court of the guard.

In the meantime, Nebuchadnezzar, after disposing of Pharaoh and his troops, delayed proceeding against Jerusalem because he was afraid that what had befallen Sennacherib would befall him. Finally, he sent Nebuzaradan, whose siege continued for two years until the days of destiny came—the seventeenth day of Tammuz, when the walls were breached, and the ninth day of Ab, when the Temple was burnt. By then the famine in Jerusalem had grown so severe that even wellborn women walked the streets like whores until they fell dead in the open places of the city.

Just before the breaching of the walls, God had commanded Jeremiah to go to Anathoth and buy a field from his uncle. Jeremiah took the command as a sign that God was about to relent against Jerusalem. But as soon as Jeremiah had left Jerusalem, an angel of the Lord set his feet against the walls of Jerusalem and breached them, permitting the Chaldeans to enter the city on the seventeenth day of Tammuz. Then, on the ninth day of Ab, four angels placed four flaming torches at the four corners of the Temple and set it on fire. Thereupon the High Priest took the keys of the Temple and cast them heavenward, and the priests and the Levites let themselves fall with their harps and trumpets into the flames. But Zedekiah, who sought to flee through an underground passage, was caught: his eyes were gouged out, he was put into an oven of brass and taken to Babylon.

When Jeremiah, returning from Anathoth, came to Jerusalem and discovered that it was destroyed, at first he set out to follow the exiles, but then turned back because he knew that there would be no comforter for the captivity left in Jerusalem (Sec. 6). On his return to Jerusalem he saw seated at the top of a mountain a woman clothed in black, her hair disheveled. The woman was Mother Zion. Jeremiah sought to comfort her by reciting to her the story of Job's ordeal and ultimate restoration (Sec. 7).

And it came to pass
That the sheep rebelled,
And would not hearken
To <their> masters' words,
For they hated their shepherds

Who were their good leaders,
And withdrew far from them.¹

1/2. By "sheep" is meant the house of Israel who in Scripture are referred to as sheep: *And ye My sheep, the sheep of My pasture* (Ezek. 34:31). "They hated their shepherds" and in their place appointed over themselves lying shepherds; indeed their hearts went astray and did not follow after their Creator, their hearts turned to follow sin. Thereupon through the holy spirit the prophet Jeremiah prophesied to the house of Israel. Jeremiah was one of four men referred to in Scripture as supremely perfect creatures whom God Himself had formed. The first was Adam. Of him it is written *Then the Lord God formed Adam out of the dust of the ground* (Gen. 2:7). The second was Jacob, of whom it is written *Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel* (Isa. 43:1). The third—he was Isaiah, of whom it is written *And now saith the Lord that formed me from the womb* (Isa. 49:5). The fourth—he was Jeremiah, to whom God said *Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee* (Jer. 1:5). These are the four men of whom Scripture says that God Himself formed them.

At Jeremiah's coming forth into the world, he cried a great cry as though he were already a full-grown youth, and exclaimed: "My bowels, my bowels! I writhe in pain! The chambers of my heart are in agony. My limbs are all atremble. Destruction upon destruction! I am the one who will announce destruction to the whole world." And whence do we know that Jeremiah spoke thus? Because it is so written: *My bowels, my bowels! I writhe in pain! The chambers of my heart! My heart moaneth within me*, etc. (Jer. 4:19).

Jeremiah opened his mouth, and reprimanding [Jerusalem as

1. Friedmann (n. 1) suggests that this Piska is based on Jer. 1, the chapter read in the synagogue on the first of the three Sabbaths preceding the Fast of the Ninth of Ab. The haftarah readings on these three Sabbaths deal with God's infliction of punishment upon Israel.

For an illuminating commentary on Piska 26, see Leo Priejs, *Die Jeremia-Homilie Pesikta Rabbati Kapitel 26* (Berlin-Köln-Mainz, 1966).

if he were speaking to] his mother, said: "Tell me,² mother, isn't it true that you did not conceive me in the manner of other women, and that you did not loose me from your bowels in the manner of other women who give birth? Have your ways been perhaps like the ways of all faithless women, and did you cast your eyes upon another? As one who has been faithless to her husband, why do you not drink 'the water of bitterness'?³ Or do you mean to brazen out your guilt?" Whence do we know that Jeremiah spoke thus? Because it is written *Yet thou hadst a harlot's forehead* (Jer. 3:3). When his mother heard his reprimand, she asked: "What makes this infant speak thus? Surely on account of no sins of mine?"⁴ Jeremiah opened his mouth and said: I speak not of you, mother; I assure you, mother, not of you. I prophesy of [Mother] Zion—of [Mother] Jerusalem.⁵ Though she adorns her daughters and clothes them with scarlet and crowns them with gold, the spoilers are coming and will despoil them: *And thou, that art to be despoiled, what doest thou, that thou clothest thyself with scarlet, that thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold*, etc.? (Jer. 4:30).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: *Before I formed thee in the belly*, that is, before I formed thee in the belly of thy mother, I designated thee to prophesy to My people. In answer Jeremiah spoke right up to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, I cannot prophesy to them. What prophet ever came forth to them whom they did not wish to slay? When Moses and Aaron rose to act in their behalf, did they not wish to throw stones at them, as is said *But all the congregation bade stone them with stones* (Num. 14:10)? Thou didst bring it about that the curly-haired Elijah rose to act in their behalf, and they laughed at him saying: Behold how he curls his locks! and sneeringly

2. "Tell me"—Parma MS.

3. See Num. 5:11-31.

4. I follow Friedmann who emends the difficult *b'wntw*, "in the time expected," to *b'wunnwty*, "sins of mine," and so renders the phrase "on account of no sins of mine."

5. "I speak not of you, mother; I assure you . . . of [Mother] Jerusalem"—Parma MS.

called him "the curly-haired fellow."⁶ And when Thou didst bring it about that Elisha rose to act in their behalf, they said derisively to him: *Go up, thou baldhead; go up, thou baldhead* (2 Kings 2:23).^{6a} Besides, I cannot venture out for Israel's sake, for *Behold, I cannot speak; I am a child* (Jer. 1:6). The Holy One blessed be He, replied: Is it not because thou art a child that I love thee? As Scripture says, *When Israel was a child, then I loved him* (Hos. 11:1), for he had not as yet savored the taste of sin. And when [with love] I redeemed Israel out of Egypt I called My people "a child," as is said *When Israel was a child . . . out of Egypt I called [him] My lad* (*ibid.*). And when I think of the congregation of Israel with love, I think of it as a child, as is said *I remember for thee the affection of thy youth* (Jer. 2:2). But I tell thee, thou art not to say *I am a child. For to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, etc.* (Jer. 1:7). Take this cup of wrath and make the nations drink. Jeremiah took the cup and asked: Whom shall I make drink first? Which principality shall drink it? God replied: Jerusalem and the cities of Judah—make them drink first, for they are the chief of all earthly kingdoms. When Jeremiah heard this command, he opened his mouth and cursed the day of his birth, as is written *Cursed be the day wherein I was born* (Jer. 20:14).

He was thus one of two men who cursed and reviled the day on which they were born—Job and Jeremiah. Job said: *Let the day perish wherein I was born* (Job 3:3). Jeremiah said: *Cursed be the day wherein I was born* (Jer. 20:14). Jeremiah went on: I say, with whom may I be compared? With a High Priest who was chosen by lot to give [a woman suspected of adultery] "the water of bitterness" to drink. They brought the woman to the High Priest. He bared her head, disarrayed her hair,⁷ held out the cup for her to drink—and saw that she was his mother! There-

6. Based on the verse *He is a hairy man* (2 Kings 1:8). The words "and they sneered and laughed," which follow in P, are deleted, as in Parma MS. See also Leo Prijs, *Jeremia-Homilie*, p. 35.

6a. Concerning Israel's treatment of its Prophets see Piska 29/30 A. 6; Sif Deut. 12 (ed. Finkelstein, 19-20); and Matthew 11: 16-19.

7. "her hair"—Parma MS.

upon he cried out, saying: Woe unto me! Mother, I sought ever to honor thee, but now behold me abasing thee! Even so Jeremiah said: Woe unto me because of thee, Mother Zion! I thought I was to prophesy good things and consolations, and lo, I prophesy for thee infliction of punishment!

Jeremiah was one of three Prophets who prophesied in his generation—Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Huldah.⁸ Jeremiah prophesied in the city squares, Zephaniah in the Temple⁹ [and] in synagogues, and Huldah among the women. Now Jeremiah prophesied, saying: If you turn away from your evil deeds and hearken to my words, the Holy One, blessed be He, will exalt you over all kingdoms; but if you do not hearken to my words, behold, He will turn His household over to the hands of pillagers,¹⁰ and they shall do with it what they will. *But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in their own counsels, even in the stubbornness of their evil heart* (Jer. 7:24).

3. At the time that Nebuchadnezzar was about to exile Israel—the time of the first exile, the exile of Jeconiah—Nebuchadnezzar's compassion turned towards them, and he spoke, saying: "If any one of the family of Jeconiah¹¹ is among you, I will make him king over you." Now Mattaniah, the son of Josiah, was there, and he, of course, was of the family of Jeconiah.¹¹ Nebuchadnezzar spoke, saying: "What is your name?" He replied: "Mattaniah." Nebuchadnezzar said: "Henceforth your name is to be Zedekiah."¹² Mattaniah thought in his heart: "Lo, he calls me Zedekiah to signify that¹³ men whose behavior will be in strict obedience (*šedek*) to law will descend from me." He did not

8. "Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Huldah"—Parma MS. See Jer. 1:2; Zeph. 1:1; 2 Kings 22:3, 4; and 2 Chron. 34:8, 22.

9. "in the Temple"—Parma MS.

10. "pillagers"—Parma MS; P: "foes."

11. "Jeconiah"—Parma MS and P; FT emends "Josiah."

12. "He replied: Mattaniah. Nebuchadnezzar said: Henceforth your name is to be Zedekiah"—Parma MS. These words also occur in the account of this incident in 'Or zaru'a on Sheḅu, ed. Friedmann, as quoted by Louis Ginzberg, in *REJ* 67 (1914), 145-46. See 2 Kings 24:17. Zedekiah signifies in Hebrew "God is righteousness (justice)."

13. "Lo, he calls me Zedekiah to signify that"—Parma MS; PE: "Lo, I shall give out my name as Zedekiah in order that."

know [what renaming him really signified]—that in his lifetime the Holy One, blessed be He, would, according to His justice, deal strictly with the Temple which He would cause to be consumed by fire. Thereupon Nebuchadnezzar made Zedekiah king over Jerusalem, saying to him: “Swear to me that you will not rebel against me.” Zedekiah replied: “Lo, I swear to you by my soul.” Nebuchadnezzar said: “I will have you swear by nothing other than the Torah which was given on Mount Sinai.” What did Nebuchadnezzar do? He brought a Scroll of the Law and laid it upon the knees of Zedekiah and made him swear that he would not rebel against him. But even before Nebuchadnezzar got back to his land, Zedekiah rebelled against him. Did not Zedekiah in fact turn upon and rebel against the Holy One, blessed be He, he together with his princes and servants, resisting the words of Jeremiah? As Scripture says, *<But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 37:2).>* And the king sent Jucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest to say, “Jeremiah, entreat God for us. The princes of the Chaldeans encompass us.” Then the host of Egypt went up to help Israel; and when the Chaldeans who were besieging Jerusalem heard [of the Egyptians’ coming] they fled from before them. But Jeremiah spoke, saying to Zedekiah’s messengers: *“Thus saith the Lord, the God of Israel: This is what ye shall say to Zedekiah the king of Judah that sent you unto Me, etc. (Jer. 37:7):* Pharaoh’s army which came up to help you shall take themselves back to Egypt, and then the Chaldeans will return and capture this city and consume it in fire.” Jeremiah went on: “Say not to your kinfolk: ‘The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us’; for they will not depart. Even if you smote down the entire Chaldean people who besieged you, so that there remained only wounded men among them, from the places where they lay they would rise up and burn Jerusalem.”

4. And it came to pass when the army of the Chaldeans dispersed for fear of Pharaoh’s army, Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go to Anathoth to partake with his fellow priests of the portion

due him as a priest. And as he was going forth through the gate of Benjamin, the man who was stationed there to watch those who came and went was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, the son of Azzur.¹⁴ Irijah was one of the descendants of the Gibeonites. Now [Irijah's grandfather], Hananiah the son of Azzur,¹⁵ was a false prophet who had misled the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, "*Behold, the vessels of the Lord's House shall now shortly be brought back from Babylon* (Jer. 27:16). And so be not afraid." When Jeremiah heard him, he had replied, "So be it. May your words come true and mine be annulled. For I stand to win and you to lose. I, a priest, will continue to eat in the Temple, and you, a Gibeonite, will continue to be a hewer of wood and drawer of water for the altar.¹⁶ In any event, as you prophesy concerning the House of the Holy One, blessed be He, prophesy also concerning yourself, for you will die this very year and be buried next year." (Indeed thus it befell Hananiah the son of Azzur. He died on the eve of the Sabbath which fell on New Year's Day, and since he was buried at the end of the Sabbath¹⁷ he was in fact buried the next year).¹⁸

When Hananiah the son of Azzur was about to die, he called Shelemiah his son and said to him: "Know that Jeremiah rose up and cursed me. See to it that you find an occasion against Jeremiah and get even with him." Shelemiah kept looking for such an occasion, but could not find one. Finally, as he was about to die, he called Irijah his son and said to him: "<See to it> that you find an occasion against Jeremiah and get even with him for what he did to my father."

So when Irijah saw Jeremiah going out through the gate of Benjamin, he went and took hold of him, and said to him: "You

14. The preceding passage is a paraphrase of Jer. 37:7-13, and 2 Chron. 36:11-14. As for Hananiah the son of Azzur, see Jer. 28:1.

15. "Irijah was one of the descendants of the Gibeonites. Now [Irijah's grandfather], Hananiah the son of Azzur"—Parma MS.

16. Hananiah came from Gibeon. See Jer. 28:1. Concerning the Gibeonites see Josh 9:3-27.

17. Burial being prohibited on the Sabbath day.

18. "Indeed thus it befell . . . the next year"—Parma MS. See Jer. 28:16-17, and Kimhi.

are going out to the Chaldeans to make peace with them." Jeremiah replied: "You lie. I am about to join my fellow priests and take the portion which is due me." But Irijah kept hold of him and brought him before the princes, and said to them: "This man has done us much evil, and now I find him going out to the Chaldeans to make peace with them."

The princes, enraged at Jeremiah, struck him and put him in a dungeon in the house of Jonathan the scribe, who, sneering at Jeremiah,¹⁹ said to him: "Behold the honor which your Friend has given you. Life is more pleasant—is it not?—in the dungeon you are in [than] in the apartment given to high officials like me."

In due course Zedekiah sent and had Jeremiah brought to him, and asked him: *Is there any word from the Lord?* (Jer. 37:17). Jeremiah said: "There is word: The king of Babylon will send you into exile."

Zedekiah's face was agitated, and he became angry at Jeremiah, whereupon Jeremiah, afraid that Zedekiah might slay him, tried to change the subject, saying: We have much to learn from the wicked who do not take revenge until they find an occasion to pick a quarrel with the one they are after. All the more so should the just abide by this rule of conduct—particularly should you, whose name Zedekiah means "the just." In what way have I sinned against the people [of Israel] that they put me into prison? Where are those who prophesied falsely saying: The king of Babylon will not go up against Jerusalem? I beg of you, I formally petition you: *Cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan* (Jer. 37:20). Then Zedekiah gave orders concerning Jeremiah, and they put him into an ordinary prison and gave him daily a loaf of bread until there was no longer any bread in Jerusalem. And Jeremiah dwelt in the court of the guard.

5. [And it was there that] *Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashhur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashhur the son of Malchiah heard the words that Jeremiah spoke*

19. "who, sneering at Jeremiah"—Parma MS; PE: "who was a kinsman of the prophet Elijah."

unto all the people saying: . . . He that remaineth in the city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence (Jer. 38:1-2). Thereupon they came to the king Zedekiah and said to him: "This man prophesies much evil concerning us. He does not have in mind the welfare of this place." The king replied: "Behold, he is in your hand; do to him what seems good to you." They then took Jeremiah and cast him into a pit which belonged to Malchiah the king's son, a pit full of water. But the Holy One, blessed be He, performed miracles for Jeremiah: first the water sank to the bottom,²⁰ and then the mud came up to the top so that Jeremiah stood stuck in the mud. And Jonathan the scribe, reviling and taunting Jeremiah, kept saying: "Put your head down in the mud—maybe you will have a good nap."

Now when Ebed-Melech the Cushite heard (Jer. 38:7). Ebed-Melech was one of four personages who were called Cushites: Zipporah, Israel, Saul,²¹ and Ebed-Melech. And why was he called Cushite? Even as a Cushite stands out because of [the color of] his skin, so in the palaces of Zedekiah Ebed-Melech stood out because of his good deeds.

He came to Zedekiah and said: Know that if Jeremiah dies in the pit, the city will be given over to our foes. Zedekiah answered: Then take thirty²² men with you and bring up Jeremiah out of the pit. See what a severe affliction famine is! Even thirty men together did not have the strength to bring up Jeremiah from the pit,²³ but finally, with great difficulty, they succeeded in bringing him up. [To begin getting him out of the pit], Ebed-Melech the Cushite had come into the king's house and thence had taken worn clouts and worn rags. He had gone and stood at the pit and had cried out saying: "My lord Jeremiah, my lord Jeremiah!" There had been no voice and no answer, and so he had put his hands on his garments and rent them, and had gone forth weeping. Actually Jeremiah had heard him, but he was afraid that it

20. Reading *And in the pit [where there had been water] the water was no more* (Jer. 38:6). Generally a pit (*bwr*), which in Hebrew is close to *b'r*, "well," has water. JV: *And in the pit there was no water.*

21. See Num. 12:1, Amos 9:7, Ps. 7:1; and MTeh 7:14 and 18.

22. "thirty," as in Parma MS, W, and Jer. 38:11; P and FT: "three."

23. "See what a severe . . . Jeremiah from the pit"—Parma MS.

was Jonathan the scribe [who was calling]. When Jeremiah heard a voice weeping, however, he had asked: "Who is he that calls me and weeps?" The reply had been: "It is Ebed-Melech the Cushite. By your life, I thought you were dead. Here is a rope. Put it against the rags under your armpits." And so they took Jeremiah up out of the pit.

6. *So Jeremiah continued to abide in the court of the guard* (Jer. 38:28) at the time that Nebuchadnezzar was striking camp and preparing to go forth against Jerusalem.²⁴ When he reached Riblah he delayed there, because he was afraid lest what had befallen Sennacherib should befall him. Then he summoned Nebuzaradan and made him chief over all his hosts and said to him: "Go conquer Jerusalem." Nebuzaradan went and laid siege to Jerusalem from the ninth year of the reign of Zedekiah until the eleventh year of his reign.²⁵ The host of Nebuchadnezzar could not conquer Jerusalem, however, because God's decree against Zion and against Jerusalem had not yet been sealed. But then the time came, the time set for Zion and for Jerusalem to be destroyed—such times are set for all the children of man, indeed a time of destruction is set for everything that exists.²⁶ Hence [in Israel's history], on the seventeenth day of Tammuz, five punishments befell Israel: The Tablets were broken at the foot of Mount Sinai, the daily offering in the Temple ceased, the city of Jerusalem was breached, Apostomos burned the Torah, and he set up an idol in the Temple.²⁷ But the time set for the Temple to be burned down was the Ninth Day of Ab.²⁸

24. [Perhaps rather "was gathering his armies, which thereupon marched upon Jerusalem." L. N.]

25. See 2 Kings 25:1-2.

26. The words "such times are set for all the children of man, indeed a time of destruction is set for everything that exists" follow Parma MS. PE are obscure. Cf. *A time set! a time [of destruction] that is to come upon the four corners of the Land* (Ezek. 7:1).

27. See Ta 4:6, and Alon, *Tolēdoṭ*, I, 259, who identifies Apostomos as an officer during the revolt against Trajan in 116-17. See also "Apostomos," JE, 2, 21.

28. On this day it was decreed that the generation of the exodus should not enter the Holy Land, that the First and the Second Temples be destroyed, that Bethar be taken, and that the city of Jerusalem be plowed under. See B.Ta 26b.

The famine was sore in the city (Jer. 52:6). The well-born daughters of Zion used to walk around and around²⁹ in the streets of the city, staring at each other, until at last one would say to her friend: "Why have you come out into the street? Has a woman like you ever before walked the streets like a whore?"³⁰ And the other would reply, saying: "What have I to hide from you? The 'boon'³¹ of famine is hard to accept. I cannot bear it." Then, supporting one another, the daughters of Zion walked around looking for food in the city, for something to put into their mouths.³² And not finding anything to eat, they clutched at the house pillars, and whenever the street turned, fell dead at the base of the pillars. Now their infants who still sucked their mothers' milk came crawling after them upon their hands and feet. Each child, recognizing his own mother, came up, took the breast he knew, and put it against his mouth, expecting to draw milk. But he drew none, and so, driven into a frenzy, he died in his mother's bosom; thus was fulfilled the text *When their life is poured out into their mother's bosom* (Lam. 2:12).

In that time the Lord said to Jeremiah: "Rise, go to Anathoth and buy the field from thine uncle Hanamel." Thereupon Jeremiah thought in his heart: Maybe God means to turn Jerusalem over to its inhabitants³³ and allow them to carry on their living as usual within it. Hence, [to assure them of His intention], the Lord says to me: Go, buy the field for thyself.

As soon as Jeremiah left Jerusalem, the angel of the Lord came down from heaven, set his feet against the walls of Jerusalem, and breached them. Then the angel cried out, saying: Let the enemies come and enter the House, for the Master of the House is no longer within. Let them despoil and destroy it. Let them go into the vineyard and cut down the vines, for the Watchman has gone

29. "used to walk around and around"—so Parma MS; PE: "were joined in."

30. "Has a woman like you ever before walked the streets like a whore?"—so Parma MS; PE: "You who have never gone forth into the street."

31. "boon"—so Parma MS; PE: "smiting."

32. "for food" and "for something to put into their mouths" added, as in Parma MS.

33. "to its inhabitants"—Parma MS.

away and left it. And to the enemies he said: Do not boast that ye have vanquished the city. Nay, a conquered city ye have conquered, a dead people ye have killed.

The enemies came and set up a platform for themselves upon the Temple Mount. Then they went up to this platform, which was centrally located at the very spot where Solomon used to sit when he took counsel with the elders. There at the very spot where the embellishment of the Temple had been planned by Solomon and the elders, there the enemies sat and planned the burning of the Temple. As they were deliberating, they lifted their eyes and saw four angels descending, in their hands four flaming torches which they placed at the four corners of the Temple, setting it on fire.³⁴

When the High Priest saw that the Temple was on fire, he took the keys and cast them heavenward. He opened his mouth and cried out: "Here are the keys of Thy House; I have been an unworthy custodian of it." He started to go, but the enemies seized him and slaughtered him at the altar in the very place where he used to offer the daily sacrifice. His daughter ran out wildly, crying: "Woe unto me! My father, the delight of my eyes!" They seized her and slaughtered her also and mingled her blood with the blood of her father.

When the priests and the Levites saw that the Temple was on fire, they took their harps and trumpets and let themselves fall with them into the flames and were consumed. When the virgins who wove the curtain for the Sanctuary saw that the Temple was on fire, they let themselves fall into the flames, so that the enemies should not violate them, and were consumed.

When Zedekiah saw all that was happening, he sought to flee through an underground passage used as³⁵ a watermain, that led to Jericho. Since he was weary, his sons were walking well ahead of him. Nebuzaradan espied Zedekiah, seized him, and then seized his ten sons. Nebuzaradan sent all of them to Nebuchadnezzar, who asked: "Tell me, Zedekiah,³⁶ what made you rebel

34. Cf. Lam. 1:13, and see Piskas 31.1 and 33.1.

35. "used as"—Parma MS; PE apparently read "alongside."

36. "Tell me, Zedekiah"—Parma MS; PE: "Say to Zedekiah."

against me? By what law shall I judge you? If by the law of your God, you deserve the death penalty, for you swore in His name falsely; if by the laws of the state, you deserve the death penalty, for he who violates his oath to the king deserves the death penalty."

Thereupon Zedekiah replied: "I beg you³⁷, slay me first so that I may not see the blood of my sons." And his sons pleaded, saying: "Slay us first so that we may not see the blood of our father shed upon the earth."

And so Nebuchadnezzar did what they asked: he slaughtered them before Zedekiah. Then he gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, put him in an oven of brass,³⁸ and took him to Babylon. And Zedekiah kept crying out, Come and see, all you children of men, that Jeremiah prophesied truly about me when he said to me: You will go to Babylon and in Babylon you will die, but your eyes will not have seen Babylon. I would not listen to his words. And here I am in Babylon, and my eyes do not see it.

In the meantime, the prophet Jeremiah left Anathoth to come back to Jerusalem. He lifted his eyes and saw the smoke of the Temple rising up. So he said in his heart: Maybe Israel has returned in penitence to bring offerings, and now the smoke of incense is rising up. But when he climbed closer and stood upon the wall, he saw the Temple overturned into heap upon heap of stones and the wall of Jerusalem broken down.³⁹ Thereupon he cried out to God, saying: *Thou hast enticed me, and I was enticed; Thou hast overcome me, and hast prevailed*,⁴⁰ etc. (Jer. 20:7). As he continued on his way, he kept crying out, saying: "What road have the sinners taken? What road have those taken who are going off to exile?"⁴¹ What road have those taken who

37. "I beg you"—Parma MS.

38. "of brass"—Parma MS. Louis Ginzberg emends the text to read "in a cage [to be displayed]." See his *Legends*, 6, 382, and PRKB, 138a, where it is said that the cherubim were put in a cage to be displayed.

39. Parma MS and probably P: *mfwgrt*, "destroyed," and not *mswgrt*, "closed up" or "shut in."

40. By the command to go to Anathoth.

41. "What road have those taken who are going off to exile?"—Parma MS.

are about to perish? I will go and perish with them." As he went, he saw the road covered with blood, and the ground on both sides soaked with the blood of the slain.⁴² He put his face close to the ground and saw the footprints of sucklings and infants who were walking into captivity. He threw himself upon the ground and kissed the footprints. When he caught up with the host going into captivity, he embraced them and kissed them. He wept with them, and they with him. He then spoke and said: My brethren and my people, all that has befallen you is the consequence of your not hearkening to the words of the prophecy that God uttered through me.

When Jeremiah reached the river Euphrates, Nebuzaradan spoke, saying to him: *If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come* (Jer. 40:4). So Jeremiah thought in his heart: If I go with the exiles to Babylon, there will be no comforter for the captivity left in Jerusalem. Thereupon he started to go forth from among them. When the exiles lifted their eyes and saw that Jeremiah was taking leave of them, all of them broke out weeping with loud lamentation and cried out, saying: "Our father Jeremiah, in truth, will you abandon us?" There they sat down and⁴³ wept, for thus it is written *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept* (Ps. 137:1). Jeremiah answered and said: "I call heaven and earth to witness that if you had wept even once while you dwelt in Zion, you would not have been driven out." Jeremiah, weeping as he walked, said: "Alas for thee, Zion, most precious of cities!"

7. Jeremiah said: [After I left the exiles] and was going back up to Jerusalem I lifted my eyes and saw at the top of a mountain a woman seated, clothed in black, her hair disheveled, crying and pleading for someone to comfort her. And I was crying and pleading: "Who will comfort me?" I came near her and spoke to her, saying: "If thou art a woman, speak to me, but if thou art a spirit, depart from me." She answered me, saying: "Do you not

42. "the slain"—Parma MS; PE: "its slain."

43. "sat down and"—Parma MS.

recognize me? I am the woman who had seven sons. Their father went away to a far city by the sea. Then a messenger came and said to me: 'Your husband has died in the city by the sea.'⁴⁴ As I was going up to lament him, behold a second messenger⁴⁵ came and said: 'Your house has fallen on your seven sons and slain them.' And in my distraction I know not for whom I am to cry or for whom I am to disarray my hair." I replied, saying: "You are not more deserving of comfort than Mother Zion who has been made into a pasture for the beasts of the field." She replied, saying: "I am thy Mother Zion, the mother of seven, as Scripture says: *She that hath borne seven languisheth*" (Jer. 15:9). Jeremiah said: Thy chastisement is like Job's chastisement. His sons and daughters were taken from Job, and thy sons and daughters have been taken from thee. His gold and silver were taken⁴⁶ from Job, and thy gold and thy silver have been taken from thee. Job was cast upon a dungheap, and thou hast been turned into a heap of dung. But even as God turned back and comforted Job, so will He turn back and comfort thee. The number of his sons and his daughters was doubled for Job, and the number of thy sons and thy daughters will be doubled for thee. His silver and his gold were doubled for Job, and the same thing will be done for thee. Job finally shook the dung from his person; and to thee it will be said *Shake thyself from the dust; arise and sit down, O Jerusalem* (Isa. 52:2). Flesh-and-blood built thee; flesh-and-blood destroyed thee. But in the time-to-come, [says the Lord], I will rebuild thee. Thus it is written *The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, He gathereth together the dispersed of Israel* (Ps. 147:2). Amen. Soon, and in our own days, may the Holy One, blessed be He, fulfill the verse that says of us: *And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion*, etc. (Jer. 35:10).

44. "Then a messenger came . . . in the city by the sea"—Parma MS.

45. "a second messenger" added, as in Parma MS. In PE the words *šny b'*, "a second [messenger] came," were conflated to read "who prophesied."

46. "were taken," as in Parma MS; PE read here and in the following lines: "I took," "I cast," "I came back," "I doubled."

SUMMARY

The consequences of disobedience to God's words

During two years the Land of Israel produced crops in such abundance as it had not produced in all the previous years of the world's existence. One of these crops was produced in the year before the children of Israel were supposed to come into the Land. The second extraordinary crop was produced in the year that the children of Israel were banished from the Land. But the children of Israel enjoyed neither crop because of their refusal to hear the word of the Lord (Sec. 1).

They who refuse to hear the word of the Lord are punished even when they are dead and buried, as is evident from what happened in the valley of the dead bones (Sec. 2). Indeed, while God is anxious to treat Israel as an only child, He will treat the children of Israel as slaves when they refuse to listen (Sec. 3), as He had indeed treated them prior to His banishment of them when they annulled all Ten Commandments. Even then, had they kept the Commandment concerning the Sabbath, God would have forgiven them (Sec. 4).

*[Hear ye the word of the Lord,
O house of Jacob, and all the families
of the house of Israel (Jer. 2:4).]*¹

1. *Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel (Jer. 2:4).* Scripture says, *If they hearken and serve Him, they shall spend their years in prosperity,*

1. Jer. 2:4-28; 3:4 is read as the haftarah on the second of the three Sabbaths preceding the Fast of the Ninth of Ab.

etc. . . . *But if they hearken not, they shall perish by the sword [of God]*² (Job 36:11-12). If Israel hearken to the Holy One, blessed be He, and serve Him, they will live out in prosperity the full span of their years as specified by David in the words *The days of our years are threescore years and ten* (Ps. 90:10). Such is the fulfillment which, according to Moses, God promises in the verse *When ye serve the Lord your God . . . the number of thy years I will fulfill* (Exod. 23:25-26).

You find that there were two years during which the Land [of Israel] produced crops in great abundance, crops such as it had not produced in all the previous years of the world's existence. One of these crops was produced in the year before³ the children of Israel were supposed to come into the Land of Israel,⁴ as is said *And they came into . . . Eschol, and there they cut down a branch with a single cluster of grapes—it had to be borne on a carrying frame which was made up of two ordinary frames [to give it sufficient length] and two more frames [under these to give it sufficient strength]* (Num. 13:23).⁵ Sixteen men, it is said, were needed to carry this branch with its single cluster of grapes; they carried it in the special way workers do, that is, the sixteen men were grouped in four gangs.⁶ The second extraordinary crop was produced in the year that the children of Israel were banished from the Land. And in connection with this crop Scripture states: *But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael: "Slay us not; for we have stores hidden in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey." So he forbore, and slew them not*

2. By famine or pestilence. See N. H. Tur-Sinai, *The Book of Job* (Jerusalem, 1957). On the basis of Ugaritic parallels he renders *lḥ* as "death."

3. "before"—Parma MS.

4. From Horeb they journeyed directly to Kadesh Barnea, where they were told to go up and take possession of the Land at once (see Deut. 1:19, 21). And but for the incident of the spies they would have done so.

5. The usual translation, *they bore it upon a pole between two*, is deemed unacceptable, since it goes without saying that to carry a pole two men are required. And so the commentator seems to take the phrase *between two* as meaning "twice extended," in length as well as in strength.

6. According to R. 'Akiḇa, there were 24 spies—12 princes and 12 servants—and 16 of the spies carried back the one cluster of grapes to show the Israelites that Canaan was inhabited by giants, hence unconquerable. See P. Soṭ 7:5, 21d.

among their brethren (Jer. 41:8), the verse indicating that the crop was so bountiful that sufficient space to store all of it was lacking, and they had to store some of it in the open field.

[As for the first crop, the one harvested in the year before Israel's arrival in the Land], you find further proof of its great abundance in the verse *And houses full of all good things which Thou didst not fill* (Deut. 6:11). [As for the second extraordinary crop, whose surplus had to be stored in the open field], you find further proof of its great abundance in the verse *They that are slain with the sword are better off than they that are slain with hunger; for these pine away, stricken through with longing for⁷ the fruits stored in the open field* (Lam. 4:9) [that were inaccessible to them because they were beleaguered in Jerusalem]. Had Israel been willing, however, to hear the word of God, the crops would have been theirs.

In another comment the verse in Job is translated *If they hearken and serve Him*, etc. . . . *But if they hearken not, they shall perish through being cast out* (Job 36:11-12), the word *šlh*, previously rendered *sword* [of God], being understood as *cast out*, as in the verse *Cast (šlh) them out of My sight, let them go forth* (Jer. 15:1). Hence, *Hear ye the word of the Lord*.

2. <Another comment: *Hear ye the word of the Lord . . . otherwise I shall plead with you in the future* (Jer. 2:4-9).> When Solomon said, *I declare that the dead who are already dead are better off than the living who are yet alive* (Eccles. 4:2), he was envisioning what Jeremiah meant by his behest: Harken while you are still alive and before you die. For I know that if you do not hearken to the word of the Lord now, you will have to do your hearkening in the future when you are dead and buried in Babylon and have been reduced to dry bones. As it is said *Ye dry bones, hear ye the word of the Lord* (Ezek. 37:4).⁸ Therefore

7. JV: *for want of*.

8. The dead who, according to Ezek. 37, were resurrected, are, in Rabbinic interpretation, men of doubtful piety, to say the least (cf. Yalkuṭ Ezek. 375 and 376). Indeed, this "resurrection" almost partakes of the nature of punishment.

I plead with you while you are still alive and before you die, to hearken to the word of God.⁹

Another comment: *Hear ye the word of the Lord*, so that if evil tidings come they will bring no harm to you. Thus it is said *He shall not be afraid of evil tidings* (Ps. 112:7). Why not? Because *his heart is steadfast, trusting in the Lord* (*ibid.*). But if you do not hearken, see what is written: *Thus saith the Lord: We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear* (Jer. 30:5). And so, too, Ezekiel said: *And it shall be, when they say unto thee: Wherefore sighest thou? that thou shalt say: Because of the tidings, for it cometh; and every heart shall be slack, and every spirit shall be faint* (Ezek. 21:12). Hence, *Hear ye the word of the Lord*.

3. Another comment: *Hear ye the word of the Lord*. Scripture says, *Hearken unto thy father—this one begot thee; and despise not thy mother when she is old* (Prov. 23:22). All that your father says to you, you are obliged to heed: *Hearken unto thy father—this one [who] begot thee*. But if he says to you, Let us bow down to idols, do not hearken to him. Why not? After all, *this one begot thee*. Only so long as you deny not the One to whom you said "This is my God, and I will praise Him" (Exod. 15:2), [hearken to] *this one [who] begot thee*.

Another comment: *Hearken unto thy Father—this is the One who begot thee*, the One of whom Moses said: *Of the Rock that begot thee thou art unmindful* (Deut. 32:18).

The quotation from Ecclesiastes declares that those who are already dead—i.e. those who died before Jeremiah delivered his "Hear ye" message—are better off than those of Jeremiah's contemporaries who heard and ignored Jeremiah's message, for these, as dry bones, will be resurrected and made to endure Ezekiel's "Hear ye" reprimand (Ezek. 37:4), that is, God's "controversy" with them, referred to in Jer. 2:9.

The words "now, you will have to do your hearkening . . . *hear ye the word of the Lord* (Ezek. 37:4)," which follow in P, are apparently a dittography and are deleted, as in Parma MS.

9. Thus making the "interim resurrection" of Ezek. 37 unnecessary for yourselves.

I am indebted to Professor Jakob J. Petuchowski who explained this passage to me in a letter (January 31, 1960).

Another comment: *Hearken unto thy Father*—thy Father in heaven, to whom it was said “This is my God,” [is the very God that] *begot thee*, and would treat you as an only child. If you do not hearken, He will treat you as slaves are treated. *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O foolish people and unwise? Is He not thy Father? [Beware] lest He act as one that hath gotten thee* (Deut. 32:6). When you do His will, He is your Father and you are His son. But if you do not do His will of your own choice, He will force you to do His will under pain of duress as though you were a slave He had gotten hold of, so that it may be asked concerning you, *Is Israel a servant? Is he a home-born slave?* (Jer. 2:14). Hence hearken unto Him and it will be well with you. Hearken unto your Father. *Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob.*

4. Another comment: *Hear ye the word of the Lord*. Koheleth said: *It is well to hear the rebuke of the Wise* (Eccles. 7:5). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I likened you to the heavens, saying *As the new heavens and the new earth . . . shall remain before Me . . . so shall your seed and your name remain* (Isa. 66:22). As for the heavens, I spoke one word to them and they stood firm, as is said *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made firm*¹⁰ (Ps. 33:6). But ye do not hearken.

In another comment, the verse is read *Hear ye the commandment of the Lord . . . O house of Israel*. You have annulled all Ten Commandments. I said, *I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2), but “They have belied the Lord, and said, ‘It is not He’” (Jer. 5:12). I said, *Thou shalt have no other gods* (Exod. 20:3), but “According to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah” (Jer. 2:28). I said, *Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain* (Exod. 20:7), but “Though they said: ‘As the Lord liveth,’ surely they swear falsely” (Jer. 5:2). I said, *Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy* (Exod. 20:8), but “They profaned

10. On the first day the heavens were still in fluid form, and they became solidified only on the second day at the command *Let there be a firmament*. See Rashi on Gen. 1:6, and B.Ḥaḡ 12a.

My Sabbaths”¹¹ (Ezek. 20:21). I said, *Honor thy father and thy mother* (Exod. 20:12), but “In thee, [O Jerusalem], have they made light of father and mother” (Ezek. 22:7). I said, *Thou shalt not murder, thou shalt not commit adultery, thou shalt not steal* (Exod. 20:13), but you are charged with such acts in the question “Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and offer unto Baal?” (Jer. 7:9). I said, *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor* (Exod. 20:13), yet in Scripture an innocent man cries out, “False witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out violence” (Ps. 27:12). I said, *Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house* (Exod. 20:14), but “They covet fields, and seize them” (Micah 2:2). O My people,¹² behold, you have annulled all Ten Commandments. Nevertheless, if you had kept the one Commandment, to an aspect of whose observance the term *the word* is applied, I would have forgiven you. And which Commandment is this? It is the Commandment concerning the Sabbath day. The outcome of obedience to or violation of this Commandment the Lord made clear through Jeremiah: *Neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath day . . . if ye diligently hearken unto Me . . . to bring in no burden on the Sabbath day . . . then the city shall be inhabited for ever* (Jer. 17:22, 24, 25). *But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath day, and not to bear a burden . . . on the Sabbath day* (Jer. 17:27). *Then . . . the Land shall be desolate* (Jer. 7:34). Hence in the verse *Hear ye the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob*, by *word* is meant the Sabbath, as Isaiah indicates in the verse *Not pursuing thy business, nor saying a word* (Isa. 58:13). And so, too, Scripture says, *Speak thou also the word unto the children of Israel, saying: No matter what, ye shall keep My Sabbaths*, etc. (Exod. 31:13).

11. “My Sabbaths”—FT; P: “My covenant.”

12. “O My people”—FT; P: “O afflicted ones.”

SUMMARY

The ominous meaning of Zedekiah's reign, and the reasons
for the destruction of the
Temple in the month of Ab

When Zedekiah began to reign, Zion knew that the time set for its destruction was about to be fulfilled. Jeremiah, seeking to be relieved from the task of prophesying Zion's destruction, was told by God that before He created the world He had made Jeremiah for this very task of prophecy. Yet had it not been for the flagrant wantonness of both men and women in Jerusalem, the doom would have been averted. Even so the merit of Isaac, of Abraham, of Jacob, and of Moses postponed the doom by several months.

Finally, in the fifth month, in the month of Ab, whose zodiacal sign is the Lion, came Nebuchadnezzar, who was called "Lion," to destroy the Temple described as "the Lion of God" (Sec. 1). The angels' intercession in behalf of Israel was of no avail. God even cast the image of Jacob from His throne as He rent His royal purple by way of showing the irrevocability of His resolve to destroy Jerusalem (Sec. 2).

*And there was woe when Zedekiah the
son of Josiah reigned as king² . . . For
neither he, nor his servants, nor the people
of the Land did hearken unto the words of*

1. What is here designated as Piska 27/28 is Piska 27.5-6 in the Breslau edition. But since the theme of the two sections is both different and distinct, I follow Friedmann in giving them a separate designation.

2. JV: *And Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned*. But the commentator finds the word *woe* intimated in the first syllable of the Hebrew *way-yimloḵ*, "and he," that is Zedekiah, "reigned as king."

the Lord, which He spoke by the prophet Jeremiah (Jer. 37:1-2).³

1. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *When a wicked man riseth,⁴ hope perishes* (Prov. 11:7). Woe because of wicked men! When they rise up, mortals cry out: Woe, woe! When Zedekiah reigned, Zion said: "Woe! Now the prediction concerning the time of destruction set for me is about to be fulfilled."⁵

At that time Jeremiah said: Master of universes, with what sins are my hands tainted? Prophets came before me and Prophets are to come after me, but through none of these wouldst Thou announce that Thou wouldst destroy Thy House. No, only through me! What did Jeremiah do? He used to go around to the gates of Jerusalem and declare [to the people coming and going]: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to me: *Say not, I am a child; for to whomsoever I shall send thee thou shalt go, and whatsoever I shall command thee thou shalt speak* (Jer. 1:7). And the people would reply: *Do not prophesy in the name of the Lord* (Jer. 11:21). And Jeremiah would answer: I, too, do not wish to mention His name. But what can I do? It is in my heart like a burning fire, I am like a woman seated on her birthstool. *If I say: "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name," then there is in my heart as it were a burning fire; it is tightly held in my bones* (Jer. 20:9). The phrase *tightly held* has reference to "tightness of the womb at giving birth,"⁶ as in the verse *For the Lord had closely tightened all the wombs* (Gen. 20:18). What would Jeremiah further do? He would go about crying: *My bowels, my bowels! I writhe in pain! The*

3. According to Friedmann, Jer. 37 used to be read as the haftarah on the Sabbath before the Ninth of Ab. Cf. Peska 5.6.

4. So Yalkuṭ Jer. 326, which reads *bḥwm rš'*. Parma MS, PE, and MT: *When a wicked man dieth, his expectation shall perish*.

5. The king's original name was Mattaniah. He was renamed Zedekiah by way of saying that divine justice was about to be vindicated, a play on *šidduk had-din*. See Piska 26.3, 6.

6. See Sif Deut., ed. Finkelstein, p. 332.

chambers of my heart! My heart moaneth within me (Jer. 4:19), by which Jeremiah meant: Is it to prophesy such agony for Israel that I was wrought? God replied: Even before I created the world thou wast wrought for the task: *At a time when there was yet [no shrub . . .] I wrought thee, in the belly I knew thee* (Jer. 1:5). The proof that here the phrase *there was yet* refers to the time when the world was not yet created is in the verse from Genesis: *There was yet no shrub of the field in the earth* (Gen. 2:5).

Another comment: *And there was woe when Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king* (Jer. 37:1), because of behavior such as that of the daughters of Jerusalem. These used to strut around, and when they saw young men sitting in the open air would clap their hands together [to call attention to themselves], and for the same reason make tinkle the ornaments upon their feet. For thus it is written *The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks . . . walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet* (Isa. 3:16). And like well-fed stallions the men neighed after them, as is said *They are become as well-fed horses, lusty stallions; every one neigheth after his neighbor's wife* (Jer. 5:8).

Another comment: *And there was woe when Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned as king* (Jer. 37:1). Why was the Temple not destroyed in the first month of the year, or in the second month, or in the third, or in the fourth, why in the fifth? The fact is that God wanted to destroy the Temple in the first month, [Nisan, whose zodiacal sign is the Lamb]. But the merit of Isaac stood forward to plead: "Master of universes, remember the sacrifice for which I let myself be tied up before Thee: I offered myself as a lamb for the sacrifice instead of the sacrificial lamb." Then God wanted to destroy the Temple in the second month, [Iyar, whose zodiacal sign is the Bull]. But the merit of Abraham stood forward, as is said *And Abraham ran unto the herd and fetched a young bull* (Gen. 18:7). So God wished to destroy the Temple in the third month, [Sivan, whose zodiacal sign is Twins]. But the merit of Jacob stood forward, as is said *And*

the boys grew (Gen. 25:27). Then God wanted to destroy the Temple in the fourth month, [Tammuz, whose zodiacal sign is the Crab]. But the merit of Moses stood forward to plead: "The crab can draw its life only from the water, and my life was drawn from the water." When God was about to destroy the Temple in the fifth month, [Ab, whose zodiacal sign is the Lion], there was no one's merit to assuage His wrath. So the Holy One, blessed be He, said: It is fitting that Nebuchadnezzar come,⁷ he who is called "lion" in the verse *A lion is gone up from his thicket, and a destroyer of nations* (Jer. 4:7), to destroy the Temple which is described as "the lion of God" in the words *Ah, Ariel, Ariel* (Isa. 29:1), and to smite Israel, also termed "lion," as is said *And as a lion doth he lift himself up* (Num. 23:24): it is fitting that destruction come in the month whose zodiacal sign is the Lion, because the children of Israel set aside the words of the Lion, He of whom it is said *The Lion hath roared, who will not fear?* (Amos 3:8).

2. At that time the angels said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, is not this the very Jerusalem of which Scripture says, *This is Jerusalem! I have set her in the midst of the nations* (Ezek. 5:5)? God replied: *But she hath rebelled against Mine ordinances in doing wickedness more than the nations* (Ezek. 5:6). The angels said: *Yet they are Thy people and Thine inheritance, that Thou didst bring out by Thy great power* (Deut. 9:29). He replied: *But My people have forgotten Me, they offer unto vanity* (Jer. 18:15). They said: Spare for the sake of the fathers! He replied: But in idolatry *The fathers kindle the fire . . . to the queen of heaven* (Jer. 7:18). They said: Spare for the sake of the children! He replied: *But the children rebelled against Me* (Ezek. 20:21)—they refused to hearken unto Me. They said: Spare for the sake of the Tribe of Judah! He replied: *But Judah did that which was evil* (1 Kings 14:22). They said: Spare for the sake of the heads of the people! He replied:

7. "It is fitting that Nebuchadnezzar come"—Parma MS; "the fifth" deleted, as in Parma MS.

But *The heads thereof judge for reward* (Micah 3:11). They said: Spare for the sake of the Tribes! He replied: *But the sons of Reuben, and the Gadites, and the half-tribe of Manasseh . . . broke faith with the God of their fathers* (1 Chron. 5:18, 25).⁸ They said: Spare for the sake of the Tribe of Dan! He replied: *But the children of Dan set up for themselves the graven image* (Judg. 18:30). They said: Spare for the sake of the disciples! He replied: *But they that handle the law knew Me not* (Jer. 2:8). They said: Spare for the sake of the Prophets! He replied: *It is because of the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests* (Lam. 4:13). They said: Spare for the sake of the kings! He replied: But what of *The altars*⁹ *that were on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made* (2 Kings 23:12)? The angels said: Spare for our own sake. He replied: *But they mocked the angels of God* (2 Chron. 36:16). They said: Spare for the sake of Thy name which was summoned to hover over them. He replied: *But they profaned My holy name* (Ezek. 36:20). They said: Since Thou dost not wish to be reconciled, why keep set in Thy throne the image of their father Jacob?¹⁰ Thereupon *He cast down from heaven unto earth the glorious image of Israel*, [the name by which Jacob is also known] (Lam. 2:1). They said further: This royal garment wherewith they clothed Thee, why keep it upon Thee?¹¹ Whereupon—if the fact were not set down in Scripture, no one would dare say it—*The Lord hath done that which He devised. He rent His purple*¹² (Lam. 2:17). They said: Master of universes, is this not the very Jerusalem concerning which Thou didst write, *Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands* (Isa.

8. *But the sons of Reuben . . . God of their fathers* (1 Chron. 5:18, 25)—David Luria, Parma MS, and PE: "But Gad, Reuben, and the half-tribe of Manasseh against the Lord your God."

9. "*altars*"—MT and Margoloth gloss; Parma MS and PE: *chariots*.

10. Jacob's image is inscribed in the throne of God. See Gen. Rabbah 68:12.

11. When the children of Israel said: "We will do and obey," it was as though they had clothed God in glory and majesty. See MTeh 22:20.

12. JV: *He hath performed His word*. But the word *by'* may be taken to mean "performed" or "rent"; and the word *mrh* may be taken to mean "word" or "purple." Cf. Lam. Rabbah 1:1.

49:16)? He replied: *I will also smite My hands together, and I will satisfy My fury* (Ezek. 21:22). When Zion saw that He was resolved not to be reconciled, she proceeded to say, [as Scripture has it], *Then Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me"* (Isa. 49:14).

May it be Thy will, O Lord our God and God of our fathers, that Thou rebuild Thy Sanctuary soon, in our days, and that Thy presence be restored within it, and that Thou gather my dispersed ones from the four corners of the earth, and that the cities of Judah be rebuilt, and that the children of Israel inhabit it ¹³ once again, taking possession of it soon, soon. Amen.

13. "it"—so Parma MS and W, which read *šm*; P and FT: *škm*, "Shechem," a city which, as in Jacob's days, is to be taken away once again from the heathen.

SUMMARY

Weeping by the
rivers of Babylon

When the children of Israel were banished, the Temple destroyed, and the Sanhedrin removed from its seat, God said *My Tent is spoiled, and all My cords are broken*, etc. (Jer. 10:20), *My tent* being the Temple and *My cords* the Sanhedrin. At that time Israel said: It would be a profanation to think that God executes judgment without justice. Thereupon they admitted that they had come to grief because of their own misdeeds and the false prophets they had listened to, and among other things grieved that they were no longer able to keep the festivals as enjoined upon Sinai. Despite their transgressions, God has promised that at the ingathering of Israel He Himself will build the Temple (Sec. 1).

After they were banished, the children of Israel sat down and wept by the rivers of Babylon, because they had not previously been given a respite long enough to allow them to sit down and weep. Or, according to another opinion, they wept by the rivers of Babylon because the waters of the Euphrates slew more of the children of Israel than the wicked Nebuchadnezzar had slain. Or possibly they wept at the Euphrates because Nebuchadnezzar tortured the kings of Judah there by loading great burdens upon their heads. As the children of Israel wept, God so grieved for them that He yearned to return the world to chaos. But then He commanded the angels to lift the burdens from the kings of Judah and He Himself went down to help. God rewarded the people of Beri, who also proffered help, by bestowing exceptional comeliness upon them (Sec. 2.)

Longing for the soil of the Land of Israel stirs to repentance. As soon as the children of Israel were exiled, they began according reverence to the commandments. They refused to sing the songs of Zion to the Babylonians, whereupon the Babylonians slew great multitudes of them. It was then that God swore a round oath: *If*

I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning (Ps. 137:5).

He who mourns for Jerusalem in this world will rejoice with her in the time-to-come; and joy will come to the world only on the ninth day of Ab: what was a day of mourning God will turn into a festive day (Sec. 3).

*By the rivers of Babylon, there
we sat down, yea, we wept, when we re-
membered Zion. Upon the willows in the
midst thereof we hanged up our harps*
(Ps. 137:1-2).¹

1. These words are to be considered in the light of what Jeremiah was inspired by the holy spirit² to say: *My tent is spoiled, and all my cords are broken* (Jer. 10:20). By whom did Jeremiah suppose these words to have been uttered? He supposed by none other than Israel. But after supposing it to have been Israel, he changed his mind and attributed the words to the Holy One, blessed be He.

[When did He utter them?] When Israel were banished, and the Temple was destroyed, and the Sanhedrin was removed from its seat,³ the Holy One, blessed be He, wept bitterly. He lifted His voice in lamentation for the children of Israel, and like one who is stunned said with regard to them: Of a surety,⁴ *My tent is spoiled*—the foes have entered it and despoiled My Sanctuary, and can I sit and be silent? (That *tent* here refers to the Temple is shown by the verse "The tent which He had made to dwell among men" [Ps. 78:60]). [And God went on:] But what am I to do? The measure of My justice is before Me. *And all My cords are broken*. By *cords* God meant the Sanhedrin. The

1. According to Friedmann Ps. 137 used to be recited on the Ninth of Ab. See Sof 18:4.

2. "by the holy spirit"—Parma MS.

3. "from its seat"—Parma MS. That is, from Jerusalem to Jamnia.

4. "Of a surety"—so Parma MS, which reads *bwd'y*; PE: 'lyhm, "for them."

Sanhedrin is to the world what cords are to a tent.⁵ Even as the cords of a tent by virtue of their give and take enable the tent to stand, so the elders who sit in the Great Sanhedrin, in fixing the dates of the festivals, in intercalating months into years and days into months, in giving way to that which may be yielded to, and in taking up the slack on what is forbidden—[the misdemeanors of men]—keep the world fit to be lived in; without the elders of the Sanhedrin, the world cannot endure decently for a moment. Now *My children are gone forth of Me, and they are not* (Jer. 10:20). But do not the children of Israel endure in the world? Do you not find Israel enduring from end to end of the world? What He meant, however, when He said *My children are gone forth of Me, and they are not*, was that they are now not able to observe the festivals in the proper manner, in the manner enjoined upon them at Sinai.

The congregation of Israel gave much the same reply to the nations of the earth at the time that Israel were banished. For the nations of the earth, expressing astonishment when they saw the children of Israel with faces black as the bottom of a pot, exclaimed: *Is this the [people of the] city that men called the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth?* (Lam. 2:15). Are these the people [of the city] of whom it was said *And thy renown went forth among the nations for thy beauty; for it was perfect through My splendor*, etc. (Ezek. 16:14)? Thereupon Israel, showing their submission to God's decree, said: It would be a profanation to think that the Holy One, blessed be He, executes judgment without justice. Thus they spoke in acknowledgment of the prophecy: *When all the nations shall say: "Wherefore hath the Lord done thus unto [the people of] this Land?" . . . then [Israel] shall reply: "Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord"* (Deut. 29:23-24). And then, [returning to the nations' comparison of their faces to the bottom of a pot], they quoted the verse *Look not upon me that I am swarthy—it is because the sun hath tanned me* (Song 1:6): Yes, what you see

5. "what cords are to a tent"—Margolioth and Friedmann emendation; Parma MS and P: "like a hall with its cords."

is that my face is as black as the bottom of a pot. *It is because the sun hath tanned me*—my own deeds brought it about: I left the Holy One, blessed be He, and went the way of idolatry after the sun and the moon. And who brought it about that I did all such things? *My mother's sons caused me this grief* (Song 1:6). *My mother's sons*⁶—that is, the false prophets I had, such as Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah and his companions⁷—it is they who caused me to feel the grip of this grief. *They made me keeper of the vineyards* (*ibid.*). When I was given the commandments at Sinai, I was enjoined to stay in observance of a festival no more than one day. But *They*, [the Prophets in exile], *made me keeper of the vineyards*—[that is, of additional commandments], which require me to stay in observance of a festival for two days, yet whereby I still do not meet fully all the obligations attendant upon the festival. [And the Prophets in exile imposed these additional commandments on me because *mine own vineyard have I not kept*].⁸

There will be none to stretch forth My tent anymore, and to set up My curtains (Jer. 10:20). What does this verse mean? Can it imply that the Temple will not be rebuilt? No. What it means is that none of you mortals will be called on to stretch forth My tent, and none of you mortals will be called on to set up My curtains. The First Temple which mortals built fell at the hand of the enemy, but the Latter Temple which the Holy One, blessed be He, will build—as is said *The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, He gathereth together the dispersed of Israel* (Ps. 147:2)—will never be destroyed.

All the preceding has been in exposition of the verse *My tent is spoiled*, etc. (Jer. 10:20).

2. Another comment: *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept*. Why does Scripture say that it was *There*

6. The false prophet who entices the children of Israel to idolatry is described in Deut. 13:7 as "thy mother's son." Hence the inference here that the phrase *My mother's sons* refers to false prophets.

7. See 1 Kings 22:11.

8. See P.Er, end of chap. 3.

we sat down? To show that before they came to the rivers of Babylon they had not sat down. From the time the exiles went forth from the Land of Israel until the time they came to the Euphrates, they had not been given a respite long enough to allow them to sit down. Besetting the exiles insidiously, the Babylonians had said: The God of these people is merciful. If they show signs of wanting to please Him, He will return to them and befriend them. If they do unite and turn, all of them, in repentance, we shall not have availed at all. Therefore the Babylonians had pressed close upon the exiles, compelling them to hustle along, as is said *We are pursued [with a heavy yoke] on our necks, we labor, and have no rest* (Lam. 5:5). *Our pursuers were swifter than the eagles of the heaven* (Lam. 4:19).

What did the children of Israel see that made them sit down and weep by the rivers of Babylon? R. Johanan explained: They saw the Euphrates which slew more of the children of Israel than the wicked Nebuchadnezzar had slain. While the children of Israel were living in the Land of Israel, they drank only rain water, running water, and spring water. But when they were exiled to Babylon, they had to drink from the waters of the Euphrates⁹ and as a result many of them died. And so the exiles wept—wept for the dead whom their enemies had slain, wept for the dead¹⁰ who had perished in the way and whom the Babylonians had not permitted to be buried, and wept for the dead whom the Euphrates had slain. Nay, they had cause to weep even more! For as the wicked Nebuchadnezzar was seated in a ship, he and all his nobles and all his princes, and with them all kinds of instruments to sing to, as is said *The Chaldeans, in the ships of their singing* (Isa. 43:14), all the kings of Judah, who had been put into iron chains, were walking naked along the edge of the river. The wicked Nebuchadnezzar looked and saw them. He said to his servants: Why are such as these walking without burdens? Instantly the servants brought burdens and

9. "of the Euphrates"—FT; Parma MS and P: "which pierce [the kidneys]." There is thus a play on the words *pri*, "Euphrates," and *pri*, "pierce." See ZA, and 'Āruḡaṭ hab-bošem, 3, 273, n. 91.

10. "for the dead"—Parma MS; PE: "for their death."

loaded them upon the shoulders of the kings of Judah until their heads were bowed down because of the burdens' weight. Thereupon the kings of Judah said of themselves, *With burdens on our*¹¹ *necks we are pursued* (Lam. 5:5). In that hour all Israel moaned loudly until their cry reached heaven. Then, so taught R. Aḥa bar Abba, the Holy One, blessed be He, yearned to return the world, all of it, to chaos and desolation, for the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "All that I created, I created only for the sake of Israel."¹² In the verse *I will also smite My hands together, and I will satisfy My fury* (Ezek. 21:22), it is as though God were saying: "The world I created, created with My two hands alone, as is said 'My [left] hand hath laid the foundation of the earth, and My right hand,' etc. (Isa. 48:13), I shall now return to chaos."

At this moment, so taught R. Taḥalifa bar Ḳeruyah, all the ministering angels came into the presence of the Holy One, blessed be He, and standing before the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Him: Master of the universe, it is true the universe and all that is in it is Thine. Is it not sad enough for Thee that Thou hast already destroyed the Temple, Thy dwelling place on earth? Wilt Thou also destroy Thy dwelling place in heaven? God replied: Do I need comforting? Am I perhaps flesh-and-blood that I need comforting?¹³ Verily, I know the beginning and I know the¹⁴ end, as is said *Even to old age I am the same, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made, and I will bear* (Isa. 46:4). *Therefore said I, "Look away from Me, I will weep bit-*

11. JV: *To our very*. But with a slight change in vocalization the word 'l, "to our very," or literally "on," may be read "with burdens on."

12. The view occurring frequently in Rabbinic literature (see MTeh 2:13-14, 11:2, 25:9, 109:4) and pseudepigraphic literature (see 4 Esdras 6:5, 59; 7:11; and Assumption of Moses 1:12) that the world was created for the sake of Israel does not owe its origin to national pride, but is rather closely connected with the ethical conception of creation. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 67-68; and Moore, *Judaism*, 1, 449-50, who cites a similar Christian statement, namely: "God, who dwells in heaven, and created the things that are out of what was not, and increased and multiplied them for the sake of His holy church," Hermas, Vis., i. 1, 6.

13. "comforting"—Parma MS; PE: "your comforting."

14. "the beginning and I know the"—Parma MS.

terly; labor not to comfort Me" (Isa. 22:4). The verse does not say, as in usual discourse, "Continue not to comfort Me," but says, *Labor not to comfort Me*. The unusual verb *labor* signifies that God meant: The words of comfort wherewith you would console Me are as blasphemies¹⁵ to Me. Go down out of My presence and lift the burden from My children, [the kings of Judah]. Instantly the ministering angels went down and lifted the burden from the kings of Judah. And not only the ministering angels,¹⁶ but the Holy One, Himself, blessed be He, lifted the burden from the kings of Judah. Were it not expressly written in Scripture it would be impossible to say such a thing as *For your sake I had Myself go*¹⁷ *to Babylon* (Isa. 43:14).

As all Israel were going into exile, the people of Beri¹⁸ and the people of nearby provinces came out towards them and saw them thrown into iron chains, and were astonished, and wept for them, saying: *These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of His Land* (Ezek. 36:20)—undeniably they are the very same. What did the people of Beri do? They stripped naked their manservants and their maidservants and brought them as a gift to Nebuchadnezzar. He asked: Why do you do this? They replied: We suppose that you are a king who likes naked people. The king said: Since no more was intended than to humiliate Israel by making the kings of Judah go naked, you may now clothe them.

What was the reward of the people of Beri? The Holy One, blessed be He, spread more comeliness among them than among all the other people of the Land of Israel. Indeed in the Land of

15. Rendering *ta'isu*, "labor," as if it read *tin'asu*, "blaspheme": "Blaspheme not in order to comfort Me."

16. "and lifted the burden from the kings of Judah. And not only the ministering angels"—Parma MS.

17. This rendering is required by the comment in the Midrash which interprets the word *šillaḥti*, "I sent," as though it read *šullaḥti*, "I was sent," that is, "I had myself go." See Mek, 1, 115.

18. According to Friedmann (n. 24), the people of Beri were of the Tribe of Asher, of the family Beri, mentioned in 1 Chron. 7:36. Riblah, where Nebuchadnezzar was encamped, was not far from the Land of Asher. The daughters of Asher were known for their beauty. Gen. Rabbah 71:10.

Israel there were none superlatively comely except for the people of Beri. It is said that when a man comes among them, he does not wish to leave without committing a sin of the body.¹⁹

3. Who is alluded to in the word *also* in the phrase *we also wept*²⁰ (Ps. 137:1)? [God]. For the children of Israel caused the Holy One, blessed be He, to weep with them.

R. Isaac expounded the verse *We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof* (Ps. 137:2). Come and see how [longing for] the soil of the Land of Israel [stirs] to repentance.²¹ While the children of Israel were in the Land of Israel, Jeremiah used to say: Repent, before the decree of judgment against you be sealed, but they would not. As soon as they were exiled, however, they began according reverence to the commandments. [Refusing to sing the songs of Zion to the Babylonians], they took their harps and hanged them upon the willows.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song, etc. (Ps. 137:3). At the time of Israel's captivity the nations of the earth said to them: Stand up and sing before the idols as you used to sing in the Temple. They replied: Had we sung songs in our own place for all the miracles which He did for us in our own place,²² we would not have been carried away captive; how shall we now sing a song before idols?

R. Isaac the son of Ṭablai used to say: The preceding dialogue is best understood by means of a parable. By what parable? Of the king who, having married a princess, said to her: "Rise and serve me a cup." Because she was loath to serve him, the king became angry at her and put her out of his house. Thereupon she went and married a man who was stricken with boils. And he said to her: "Rise and serve me a cup." She said to him: "You good-for-nothing! I am a princess of royal blood, and I was

19. See MTeh 137:3 for a parallel to the above.

20. Usually rendered *yea, we wept*. But the word *gm*, "yea," may be understood with equal plausibility as *also*.

21. Parma MS and SPR: "How the earth of the Land of Israel is resistant to repentance."

22. "for all the miracles which He did for us in our own place"—Parma MS.

married to a king. But when he said to me, 'Serve me a cup,' I would not serve it to him, and he became angry at me and put me out of his house. Had I been willing to serve him the cup, I would now be adding honor to the honor I already had, for I would have remained in my own place. And yet you dare say to me: 'Rise and serve me a cup!'"

So Israel say to the nations of the earth: Had we sung songs in our own place before the Holy One, blessed be He, for all the miracles which He did for us, we would have abided in our place and not been banished from our Land. And so now, shall we sing songs before alien gods? Thereupon the Babylonians rose up in slaughter of the children of Israel and heaped multitudes upon multitudes. Though many of them were slain, nevertheless there was gladness among the children of Israel, because they had not sung before an alien god, as is said *For though they laid us on heaps,*²³ *there was gladness* (Ps. 137:3).

At that slaughter the Holy One, blessed be He, swore a round oath. If one dare say such a thing, He pronounced a curse²⁴ upon Himself: If I do not carry out My oath, that is, as Scripture says, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning* (Ps. 137:5). Then the Holy One, blessed be He, drew back His hand and put it behind Him when Israel was banished, as is indicated in the verse *He hath drawn back His right hand from before the enemy* (Lam. 2:3). And if one dare say such a thing, He has not yet returned it to its natural position. Hence it may be concluded that what the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel was this: May I forget My right hand which I have drawn back behind Me, if I do not perform this oath: I will not forget you among the nations of the earth.

Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I remember not Jerusalem; if I set not Jerusalem above my chiefest joy (Ps. 137:6). The Holy One, blessed be He, will restore all its joy to Jerusalem, as is said *And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be*

23. So AV, margin; JV: *And our tormentors asked of us mirth.*

24. "a curse"—Parma MS.

upon their heads (Isa. 35:10). And he who mourns for Jerusalem in this world will rejoice with her in the time-to-come, as is said *Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her* (Isa. 66:10). It was said in the name of Abaye: Joy to the world will come only on the Ninth Day of Ab, of yore a day set apart for mourning,²⁵ which the Holy One, blessed be He, will turn into a festive day, as is said *For I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow* (Jer. 31:13).

25. See Piska 26.6, and n. 28.

SUMMARY

Mourning on the
Ninth of Ab

In keeping with the sadness of the day, priests were enjoined not to bathe on the Ninth day of Ab and hence were ritually unfit to eat the heave offering in the evening. Their heeding of the injunction is proof that the destruction of the Temple is never out of Israel's mind. At the time of its destruction, God is said to have wept (Sec. 1)—is said again to have wept night and day (Sec. 2). He wept for fallen Jerusalem; He wept for those who died from drinking the water of the rivers of Babylon. He wept at Jerusalem's weeping for herself; He wept at Jeremiah's departure from the exiles going into captivity (Sec. 3).

Weeping, she weeps in the night
(Lam. 1:2).¹

1. Let our Masters instruct us: What is the precept that applies to the following question: Is it permissible for priests on the Ninth of Ab to take the bath that makes them ritually fit for the eating of heave offering, the produce set aside for the priests? R. Hanina the deputy High Priest taught: "The House of our God is worthy enough for a priest to give up a bath for its sake."²

1. The Book of Lamentations is read on the Ninth of Ab, the day on which, according to tradition, both Temples were destroyed. See Piska 26.6, and n. 28.

2. All rites observed by a mourner, including abstention from bathing, are observed on the Ninth of Ab (Piska 31.1, and B.Ta 30a). But before eating heave offering in the evening, priests regularly bathed during the day (see B.Ta 13a, and *Mishnah*, ed. Albeck, 1, 325-26). R. Hanina ruled that even though such a bath be linked to the performance of a commandment, it is not to be taken on the Ninth of Ab.

It goes without saying that all of us are required to have always in memory the destruction of the Temple. For even the Holy One, blessed be He, said: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning* (Ps. 137:5). And Jeremiah said: *Remembering, my soul shall remember, and be bowed down within me* (Lam. 3:20). If one dare mention such a thing, see what Scripture says befell the splendor of the Holy One, blessed be He: *In that day did the Lord, the God of hosts, call to weeping, and to lamentation*, etc. (Isa. 22:12). And again: *Therefore said I: "Look away from Me, I will weep bitterly"* (Isa. 22:4). If one dare speak thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: As it is below in My abode, so is it in My presence above—in both there is weeping over that which came to be. There is weeping in My very own presence (if one dare ascribe such a statement to God) because I left My abode, of which I said *This is My resting place for ever*, etc. (Ps. 132:14). My abode weeps because I took away³ the glory of My repose in her and left her. So she weeps. And the proof? That which is read as the lesson for the day, *Weeping, she weeps in the night*.

2. <Weeping, she weeps in the night>. R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Thus saith the Lord . . . Let mine eyes run down with tears day and night, and let them not cease* (Jer. 14:15, 17). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: *Weeping, she [that is, the congregation of Israel] weeps in the night*, thereby implying: Ye weep in the night, but I weep day and night. Why? Because My presence knows no sleep, as is said *Behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep* (Ps. 121:4). Now with regard to the verse quoted above from Jeremiah, *Thus saith the Lord . . . Let mine eyes run down with tears day and night, and let them not cease*, Scripture does not indicate clearly whether or not the prophet was speaking for himself when he said *Let mine eyes run down with tears*. But inasmuch as Scripture says *day and night*—and it is impossible for mortals to

3. So emended by MC; PE: "I left."

weep day and night—and says further *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people* (Jer. 8:23), it follows that the prophet was speaking for the Holy One, blessed be He, whose presence knows no sleep, as is said *Behold, He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep.*

Weeping, she weeps (Lam. 1:2). Why is weeping twice mentioned? One outburst of weeping refers to those slain in Jerusalem; the other outburst of weeping refers to the famine in the city, when its inhabitants ate the flesh of their sons and daughters, as is said *The hands of women full of compassion have sodden their own children, they were their food*, etc. (Lam. 4:10).

R. Johanan taught: Just as the people of Zion ate the flesh of their sons and daughters, so the women of Samaria ate the flesh of their sons and daughters, as is said *And there was a great famine in Samaria; and behold, they besieged it*, etc. *And as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, there cried a woman unto him, saying: "Help, my lord, O king." And he said: "If [the Lord] do not help thee, whence shall I help thee? Out of the threshing floor, or out of the wine press?"* (2 Kings 6:25-27). In effect the king was saying to her, "Am I God?" Nevertheless, he changed his attitude and gave heed to her, saying: "What ails you?" Scripture reports the conclusion of this conversation as follows: *And the king said to her: "What aileth thee?" And she answered: "This woman said unto me: Give thy son, that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. So we boiled my son, and did eat him; and I said unto her the next day: Give thy son, that we may eat him; and she hath hid her son"* (2 Kings 6:28-29). Anyone hearing this last statement might suppose that the other woman had hidden her son and that he was alive. <But R. Johanan said that in fact he was slaughtered and boiled> so that she might eat him all by herself. And the proof? The fact that Scripture quotes one woman as saying to the other, *I said unto her the next day: Give thy son, that we may eat him.* Note that she is not quoted as saying "that we may

slaughter him." Hence it follows that he was already slaughtered and boiled.

Then the king said: *God do so to me, and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat shall stand on him this day*, etc. (2 Kings 6:31)—[the king blamed Elisha for refusing to invoke God's mercy for the raising of the siege.]

R. Johanan further maintained: Fathers ate the flesh of their sons and daughters at the destruction of the First Temple as well as at the destruction of the Second. This horror Jeremiah⁴ lamented, in line with *Therefore the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of thee, and the sons shall eat their fathers* (Ezek. 5:10).

3. Another comment: Why is weeping twice mentioned—*Weeping, she weepeth*? One outburst of weeping was for fallen Jerusalem; the other outburst of weeping was for [those who died from drinking the water of]⁵ the rivers of Babylon, as is said *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept*, etc. (Ps. 137:1).

Weeping, she weepeth. Jerusalem wept for herself, and also wept for Jeremiah's departure from the exiles going into captivity, for he had lightened the yoke for them. How did he do so? He used to put a yoke upon his own neck, and Nebuzaradan would lift it and say to him: "You are putting my life in danger. May the king not hear of the yoke upon your neck and say to me, 'Did I not command you concerning Jeremiah to *take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm*, etc. (Jer. 39:12)?" Nebuzaradan went on to say: "I see three things in you: a false prophet, a murderer, and a meddler with the justice of the punishment that God inflicts. And yet," Nebuzaradan went on, "was it not through you that the Holy One, blessed be He, said that [Jerusalem, the holy] place, must be destroyed?" Jeremiah replied: "Through me, but through other Prophets also." And he persisted in putting himself into a yoke, so that when the guards⁶

4. Parma MS: "Ezekiel."

5. See Piska 28.2.

6. "the guards"—FT; P: "the captives."

who were always goading the captives along, saw Jeremiah alongside the captives, they let the captives walk at an easier pace.

And how did they goad them along? What did they do to them? They would take a captive [who had slowed down], slay him, and dismember him. Then they would throw the members down before the captives who at the sight would be jolted to keep moving. [The guards acted as cruelly] as robbers let loose upon a flock of sheep, as is said *We are pursued [with a heavy yoke] on our necks, [as we are goaded along]* (Lam. 5:5). And so Jerusalem wept both for herself and for Jeremiah's departure from the exiles: *Weeping, she weeps in the night.*

SUMMARY

Why
the twenty-two letters
of the Hebrew alphabet
were rearranged in the Torah into
acrostics of mourning

Unlike idols, God demands modest offerings. And so it was not because of paucity of offerings but because of excess of sins that God took on Nebuchadnezzar as His "servant" and took upon Himself the burden of His exile in Babylon (Sec. 1). Thus it came about that the twenty-two letters of Torah, meant to form a chaplet of grace, were changed into acrostics which in the Scroll of Lamentations mourn the destruction of Jerusalem.

The Scroll of Lamentations had itself ascribed to Jeremiah—another way of saying that God spoke to Jeremiah again and again, having already spoken to him in the Book that bears his name—because he insisted upon the honor due Israel the son as well as the honor due God the Father (Sec. 2).

<How doth the city sit solitary!
(Lam. 1:1).

1. It is written *Thou hast not called upon Me, O Jacob, but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel* (Isa. 43:22). The priest of an idol would come to one of the children of Israel and say: "The idol tells me that you absolutely refuse to offer one of your sons as a sacrifice to it." The Israelite would reply: "Are my sons

1. What is here designated as Piska 29/30 is Piska 29.4-5 in the Breslau edition. But since the theme of the two sections is both different and distinct, I follow Friedmann in giving them a separate designation.

under my control? Is not each and every one of them on his own, occupied and busy with his own work? But wait. I have a little boy who is at school² and I have neither profit nor pleasure from him. Him, I can offer as a sacrifice.” And at once he took the boy and brought him as an offering.³ As Scripture says, *Moreover thou hast taken thy sons and thy daughters, whom thou hast borne unto Me, and these hast thou sacrificed unto them to be devoured* (Ezek. 16:20). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: You sacrifice children to sticks and stones and are not weary; but of Me you are weary, as is written *But thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel*.

Neither hast thou honored Me with thy sacrifices (Isa. 43:23). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: Have I perhaps imposed upon you the burden of making you bring peace offerings to Me? No, for it is written “If his offering be a sacrifice of peace offerings” (Lev. 3:1)—that is to say, if a man wishes to bring peace offerings, he brings them of his own free will. *I have not made thee to serve with meal offerings* (Isa. 43:23): I have not imposed upon you the burden of making you bring meal offerings to Me, for it is said “When any one chooseth to bring a meal offering unto the Lord, his offering shall be of fine flour” (Lev. 2:1). *Nor wearied thee with frankincense* (Isa. 43:23): I have not told you that you must bring hundredweights of frankincense—only a handful, as is said “And he shall take thereout his handful . . . with all the frankincense thereof” (Lev. 2:2). *Thou hast bought Me no sweet cane with money* (Isa. 43:24): “I have not told you that you must bring Me centenaries of incense, only half a mina in the morning and half a mina in the afternoon.”⁴ Come and consider this: Micah’s hewn image [of God] stood in Gareb,⁵ and the sanctuary in Shiloh. Now incense was offered up with a shovel before Micah’s

2. See the parallel passage in Lam. Rabbah 1:9.

3. So Jastrow, p. 966, who changes the obscure *sumkynw* to *wmkrybw*.

4. See Yoma 4:4. A mina = 591 grams, about a pound and five ounces.

5. See Judg. 17. In B.Sanh 103b it is said that the distance between Gareb and Shiloh was three miles. Both sites were in the highlands of Ephraim in central Palestine.

hewn image in the manner described in the verse *And by a shovel is the cloud of incense made to go up* (Ezek. 8:11), while in Shiloh only half a mina was offered in the morning, and only half a mina in the afternoon. But the two columns of smoke got entangled as they went up toward heaven. As Scripture says, *And they got entangled in thick clouds of smoke* (Isa. 9:17). And do you suppose that the Holy One, blessed be He, hesitated, asking, "Which offering of incense shall I accept, this one or the other?"

*But with thy sins thou hast made Me take on another [kind of] servant*⁶ (Isa. 43:24). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: I used to speak [of a good man as My servant]. Thus *My servant Moses is not so* (Num. 12:7); *He chose David also His servant* (Ps. 78:70); and *Fear not, O Jacob, My servant* (Isa. 44:2). But you have brought it about by your sins that I must call a wicked man "servant," as is written *Behold . . . I will take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant* (Jer. 43:10).

In another comment, the words are rendered *But thou hast burdened Me with thy sins* (Isa. 43:24). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: Because of your sins you made Me assume the burden of exile in Babylon, as is said "Because of you I had Myself go to Babylon"⁷ (Isa. 43:14). *Thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities* (Isa. 43:24). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: Your sins have made Me occupy Myself continuously with weeping and lamentations, crying out *How doth the city sit solitary!*

2. Another comment: *How doth the city sit solitary*—forsaken! The entire world is astonished at her: *Wherefore is the Land perished, and laid waste like a wilderness, so that none passeth through? And the Lord saith: Because they have forsaken My law* (Jer. 9:11–12). Here God speaks like the king who so loved his son that he made a golden necklace for him and hung it upon

6. JV: *But thou hast burdened Me with thy sins*. But the verb *h'bd* may mean either "burden" or the causative "make into a servant."

7. JV: *For your sake I have sent to Babylon*. See Piska 28, n. 17.

his neck. It was not long before the son made the father angry. Thereupon the father took away the necklace and made chains for his son and put them upon his son's feet. Likewise the Holy One, blessed be He, made the letters of the Torah into a necklace and hung it about the neck of Israel, as is said *For they shall be a chaplet of grace unto thy head, and chains about thy neck* (Prov. 1:9); *She will give to thy head a chaplet of grace; a crown of glory will she bestow on thee* (Prov. 4:9). But it was not long before the children of Israel forsook the Torah, as is said *They forsook My Torah and rejected it* (Jer. 6:19).⁸ Thereupon He arranged the [twenty-two] letters of Torah into acrostics to indicate the grievous events befalling Israel, [the first acrostic beginning with 'alef, the first letter of the verse] *How doth the city sit solitary!*⁹

Another comment: *How doth the city sit solitary!* What did the Scroll of Lamentations see in Jeremiah that made it ascribe itself to him? It saw that he was one of four kinds of sons: One kind insisted upon the honor due the Father, but did not insist upon the honor due [Israel] His son; and one insisted upon the honor due the son, but did not insist upon the honor due the Father. Two—[and Jeremiah was one of them]—insisted upon the honor due the son as well as the honor due the Father.¹⁰ Elijah [was the kind of son who] insisted upon the honor due only the Holy One, blessed be He. When Elijah stood up and made accusations . . .¹¹

8. MT: *And as for My teaching, they have rejected it.*

9. The acrostics continue through the first four chapters of the Book of Lamentations. The children of Israel left the Torah—its precepts and its letters—which had been a chaplet of grace for Israel; but since the children of Israel cannot be rid of Torah—of its precepts and letters—it is still with them in disguised form, the entire alphabet making up an acrostic of woe. Cf. Piska 29/30B. 4, end and n. 17.

10. Jeremiah said: *We have transgressed and have rebelled; Thou hast not pardoned* (Lam. 3:42)—implying that God should have pardoned, should have shown greater consideration to Israel. See Mek, 1, 8–9, where Elijah is represented as the type who insisted on the honor due the Father, and Jonah as the type who insisted on the honor due the son.

11. The passage is incomplete. In the parallel in Mek, it is said that prophecy was taken away from Elijah, and that God spoke to Jonah only once again and no more; whereas God spoke to Jeremiah again and again—hence Lamentations is attributed to Jeremiah. See B.BB 15a.

SUMMARY

The certainty of
God's comforting

If Boaz' words succeeded in comforting Ruth, surely when God comes to comfort Jerusalem, saying *Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people* (Isa. 40:1), He will succeed (Sec. 1). He will speak to the heart of Jerusalem, because the heart is the seat of all action (Sec. 2). Indeed, it was Jerusalem's heart which inspired her misdeeds—misdeeds which God sought to prevent by having myriads of angels with crowns to crown Israel descend with Him on Sinai; by giving Israel the booty of nations; by providing six meeting places with Israel; by miracles performed in Israel's behalf; by giving the name Zion to Israel, a name that signifies her difference from all other peoples. And so since the breach caused by Israel's misdeeds is so great, only God will be able to heal it and bring comfort to Jerusalem (Sec. 3).

God will comfort Jerusalem through a great prophet, Isaiah, to whom the words *Thou hast loved righteousness* (Ps. 45:8) will apply. Isaiah will prophesy as from the mouth of the Divine Power, with a double portion of the Divine Power (Secs. 4-5). God will speak kind and comforting words to Israel as Joseph spoke to the hearts of his brothers, and, like Joseph, He will succeed in comforting Jerusalem (Sec. 6). And if Job who sinned was eventually given a double recompense, so Jerusalem will eventually be given a double recompense of comfort: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people* (Sec. 7).

God does not smite a people and leave them desolate. When He brings disaster upon a people, He tries to console them by citing comparable disasters. Indeed, the reason that the Ten Tribes were banished first and after them the Tribe of Judah was to allow them to comfort each other (Sec. 8).

Moses' mode of arguing with God after the incident of the golden

* In Parma MS, fol. 197a-98a, the following passage, not in PE, precedes Piska 29/30B.

calf is cited by way of emphasizing the idea that Israel are for ever God's people and that He is their comforter (Sec. 9). Through Isaiah He came to comfort all the generations (Sec. 10).

Comfort ye, comfort ye My people (Isa. 40:1).

1. These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *Shall mortal man act more justly than God?* (Job 4:17)—shall mere man be more just than his Creator? *Shall [comforting uttered by] a man be more radiant than his Maker's?*¹ (*ibid.*) By these words the Holy One meant: Boaz comforted, and I, at the very least—shall I not comfort as effectively? Boaz began to comfort Ruth by saying *It hath been told and told me* (Ruth 2:11). Why did he use *told* twice? Because he meant: Your good conduct in the house has been told me,² and your good conduct in the field has been told me. And Boaz continued: It has been told *what*³ *thou hast done for thy mother-in-law even after the death of thy husband* (*ibid.*)—and need I speak of what you did for her while your husband was still alive? It has been told *how thou hast left thy father and thy mother* (*ibid.*), your own flesh and blood; and left *the land of thy nativity* (*ibid.*), your own home. On the other hand, by the words *thy father and thy mother* Boaz may have meant that Ruth forsook idolatry, the words being thus understood as in the verse "Who say to a stock: 'Thou art my father,' and to a stone: 'Thou hast brought us forth'" (Jer. 2.27); and by *the land of thy native ways* Boaz meant further that Ruth forsook the ways to which she was accustomed. And in saying *thou art come unto a people which a short time ago thou wouldst not have been permitted to know*

1. JV: *Shall mortal man be just before God? Shall a man be pure before his Maker?* Apparently the commentator construes *thr*, "pure," as though written *zhr*, "be radiant."

2. "Why . . . told me"—parallel in PRKM, p. 263.

3. MT: *All*.

(*ibid.*),⁴ Boaz meant: Had you come a short time ago we could not have accepted you as a proselyte, because the new interpretation of the law concerning proselytes had not yet been established, the new interpretation being as follows: "An Ammonite man may not marry an Israelite woman, but an Ammonite woman [who has been converted] may marry an Israelite. A Moabite man may not marry an Israelite woman, but a Moabite woman [who has been converted] may marry an Israelite."⁵ [And Boaz said further to Ruth]: *The Lord recompense thy work* (Ruth 2:12), by which he meant, "He who gives recompense to the righteous will give you your recompense." *And thy reward will be complete* (*šlmh*) (*ibid.*), the word *šlmh* hinting, so taught R. Jose, that Solomon (*šlmh*)⁶ will descend from you. Boaz continued: *From the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge* (*ibid.*). According to Scripture, taught R. Abin, the earth has wings, the morning star has wings, the sun has wings, the cherubim have wings, the seraphim have wings. And the proof that the earth has wings? The verse *From under the wing of the earth have we heard songs: "Glory to the righteous"* (Isa. 24:16). Proof that the morning star has wings? The verse *If I take the wings of the morning* (Ps. 139:9). Proof that the sun has wings? The verse *But unto you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings* (Mal. 3:20). Proof that the cherubim have wings? The verse *And the sound of the wings of the cherubim* (Ezek. 10:5). Proof that the seraphim have wings? The verse *Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings* (Isa. 6:2). Great is the power of those who do deeds of kindness, for they are not given refuge merely under the wings of any of the creatures mentioned above! In whose shadow, then, are they given refuge? In the shadow of

4. JV: *and art come unto a people that thou knewest not heretofore.*

5. See [Piska 49.2]; Yeb 8:3; and MTeh 1:1. Ruth came from Moab.

6. Since the text had already stated *The Lord recompense thy work*, why add *and thy reward will be complete*? Hence the commentator concludes that the words added intimate an additional and extraordinary gift to Ruth, namely, that among her descendants was to be Solomon ("the complete one") in whose days Israel's glory was "complete." See [Piska 15, Preamble].

the Holy One: *The God of Israel under whose wings thou art come to take refuge* (Ruth 2:12). Of this refuge, Scripture says, *Precious is the loving-kindness ordained by Thee, O God! Because of it, the children of men take refuge in the shadow of Thy wings* (Ps. 36:8).

Then Ruth answered Boaz: *I have surely found favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken to the heart of thy handmaid* (Ruth 2:13). "Heaven forbid! No,"⁷ said Boaz (Ruth 2:14), "speak not of yourself as a handmaid—you are counted among the Matriarchs."⁸ Now does it not follow logically that if Boaz who spoke kind words to Ruth succeeded in comforting her, surely when the Holy One comes to comfort Jerusalem, and says *Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people,* He will succeed in comforting her.

2. *Speak ye comfortably to the heart of Jerusalem* (Isa. 40:2). Elsewhere Scripture says, *I spoke with my own heart* (Eccles. 1:16). According to Scripture, the heart can see, the heart can speak, the heart can know, the heart can hear, the heart can stand, the heart can fall, the heart can walk, the heart can cry out, the heart can be glad, and the heart can be comforted. The proof that the heart can see? The verse *Yea, my heart had seen much experience* (*ibid.*). Proof that the heart can speak? The verse *I spoke with my own heart* (*ibid.*). Proof that the heart can know? The verse *The heart knoweth its own bitterness* (Prov. 14:10). Proof that the heart can hear? The verse *Give thy servant therefore an understanding heart* (1 Kings 3:9). Proof that the heart can stand? The verse *Can thy heart stand and endure, or can thy hands be strong?* (Ezek. 22:14). Proof that the heart can fall? The verse *Let no man's heart fall*⁹ *within him* (1 Sam. 17:32). Proof that the heart can walk? The verse *And he said unto him: "Went*

7. Since the word *lh*, "to her," is spelled exceptionally without the *mappik*, it is construed as though spelled *l*, "no."

8. In the Hebrew there is a play on 'amahot, "handmaidens," and 'immahot, "Matriarchs." The word *n'mnt*, "worthy of trust," in Parma MS, I take to be a miswriting of *nmnyt*, "counted." Cf. parallel in PRKM, p. 265.

9. JV: *jail*.

not my heart [with thee]?" (2 Kings 5:26). Proof that the heart can cry out? The verse *Their heart cried unto the Lord* (Lam. 2:18). Proof that the heart can be glad? The verse *Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth* (Ps. 16:9). Proof that the heart can be comforted? The verse *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people. Speak ye comfortably to the heart of Jerusalem.*

3. *Speak ye . . . to the heart of Jerusalem* (Isa. 40:2). Elsewhere Scripture says, *By what other devices could I have forewarned thee?* (Lam. 2:13). By how many Prophets did I forewarn thee? According to R. Isaac, every day there was one prophet in the morning and another prophet at dusk, for it is written *The Lord forewarned Israel and Judah, by the hand of every prophet [who received the word by day], and of every seer [who saw visions at night]*¹⁰ (2 Kings 17:13). According to R. Nathan, every day there were two Prophets in the morning [and two Prophets at dusk]. For Scripture says, *I have sent unto you . . . the Prophets . . . betimes and often* (Jer. 7:25)—thus [two] at dusk; and says again *The Prophets, whom I send unto you . . . betimes and often* (Jer. 26:5)—thus two in the morning.

In another comment, the verse in Lamentations is taken to mean *With what other ornaments*¹¹ *might I have adorned thee?* (Lam. 2:13). With how many ornaments did I adorn thee, [O Israel]! As R. Johanan said: The day the Holy One went down to give the Torah, sixty myriads of ministering angels with crowns to crown Israel descended with Him.

In another comment, the verse is read *What more booty*¹² *might I have given thee?* (Lam. 2:13)—besides the booty of Egypt, the booty of Sihon and Og, the booty of the Red Sea, and the booty of the thirty-one kings of Canaan?

In another comment, the verse is read *Where else might I have*

10. "*who saw visions at night*"—David Luria on Lam. Rabbah 2:13. Cf. Job 4:13.

11. By metathesis "*ydk*," "forewarn thee," is read as though written "*dyyk*" "ornament thee."

12. "*ydk*," previously rendered "forewarn" and "ornament," is now construed as though derived from "*d*," "booty."

*met thee?*¹³ (Lam. 2:13). In how many places did I meet with thee, [O Israel]!—in the Tent of Meeting in the wilderness, in Gilgal, in Shiloh, in Nob, in Gibeon, and in the Temple which is to endure for ever. *To whom else might I have likened thee?* (*ibid.*). What other people have I treated like thee? What other people did I redeem with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and bring ten plagues upon its enemies? For whom else did I divide the sea? For what other people did I make manna come down? For what other people did I sweep quail inland from the sea? What other people did I surround with clouds of glory? What other people did I bring near to Mount Sinai and give My Torah to? *O daughter Jerusalem* (*ibid.*)—O daughter, thy name bids thee to fear (*yr'*) Me and thus be at peace (*šlw m*) with Me. [But since thou dost not fear Me], *How can I be reconciled with thee*¹⁴ *and comfort thee?*—*thee, O virgin daughter, whose very name, Zion, sets thee apart* (*šywn*) (*ibid.*): O sons of Israel, you are those who are set apart for My sake by your obedience to precepts concerning circumcision, concerning the cutting of hair,¹⁵ and concerning the fringes on the corners of garments. *But alas, thy breach is great like the sea; only He can heal thee* (Lam. 2:13). Only He, said R. Hiľfai, who can heal the breach of the sea can heal thee.¹⁶ R. Joshua the son of R. Nehemiah said: He whom you extolled at the Red Sea with the words *Who is like unto Thee?* (Exod. 15:11), He can heal thee. R. Abin read the conclusion of the verse from Lamentations as a question:¹⁷ Who can heal thee? Can it possibly be *Such prophets [as] have seen visions for thee of vanity and delusion* (Lam. 2:14)? And the Rabbis asked pointedly: Who can heal thy prophets for thee?

13. "ydk, previously rendered "forewarn," "ornament," and "booty," is now interpreted as though derived from y'd, "meet."

14. JV: *What shall I equal to thee?* But see Saul Lieberman's interpretation of the word *šwh* cited in PRKM, p. 267.

15. See Lev. 19:27.

16. The waters of the sea will be made sweet. See Piska 33.12, and Exod. Rabbah 15:22.

17. "R. Joshua the son of R. Nehemiah . . . R. Abin read the conclusion of the verse from Lamentations as a question"—PRKM, p. 268.

4. *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows* (Ps. 45:8). When the Holy One was about to punish the people of Sodom, our father Abraham said to the Holy One right to His face: Master of the universe, Thou didst swear that Thou wouldst not bring again a flood to the world, as is said *I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth* (Isa. 54:9). Now, though Thou art not bringing a flood of water, Thou art about to bring on a flood of fire. Dost Thou thus intend cunningly to evade Thine own oath? *That were a profanation for Thee to do after this manner* (Gen. 18:25); and, as R. Levi construed the words, Abraham went on to say, *The Judge of all the earth cannot exercise justice too strictly*¹⁸ (*ibid.*). If Thou seekest strict justice there will be no world, and if Thou seekest to have a world, strict justice cannot be exercised. Dost Thou think to take hold of the rope at both ends? Thou desirest Thy world, and Thou desirest justice also. If Thou wilt not relent a little, the world will not endure. The Holy One replied to Abraham: *Thou hast loved righteousness, thou hast loved making out My creatures to be righteous and hast hated making them out to be wicked. Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness*¹⁹ *above thy fellow creatures*. In saying this, the Holy One meant: As thou livest, from the time I spoke to Noah to the time of My speaking to thee, I have spoken to no other creature of Mine. But with thee I make a beginning of speaking: *After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram* (Gen. 15:1).²⁰

5. R. Judah the son of R. Simon interpreted the allusion in the Psalm as referring to Isaiah. For Isaiah said: As I walked about²¹ in my house of study, *I heard the voice of the Lord, saying:*

18. JV: *shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly?*

19. The words of prophecy are gladness. Cf. Jer. 15:16.

20. In a direct vision, and not in a dream in the night or through the holy spirit, as earlier when *the Lord said unto Abram: Get thee out of thy country, etc.* (Gen. 12:1). See Nahmanides on Gen. 12:7, and Maimonides, *Guide*, 2:45.

21. "walked about"—parallel in PRKM, p. 269, and Lev. Rabbah M, p. 197; Parma MS: "lay prone." Cf. 1 Sam. 3:2.

"Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? (Isa. 6:8). When I sent Amos, they called him mockingly 'Tongue-heavy.' (Indeed, as R. Johanan pointed out, his name, 'Amos, signifies that he was tongue-heavy, 'amus). Israel said derisively of My choice that the Holy One scattered²² all the other children of men and caused His presence to dwell on none other than this Tongue-heavy, this man whose tongue is deformed. And when I sent Micah, they smote him²³ upon the cheek, as is said *They smite the reprover of Israel with a rod upon the cheek* (Micah 4:14). Now whom shall I send?" Then Isaiah said: "*Here am I; send me*" (Isa. 6:8). The Holy One warned him: "My children are both rebellious and obstinate. Art thou willing to be smitten and put to shame?" Isaiah replied: "Even if such be my portion, *I am ready to give my back to the smiters* (Isa. 50:6). But am I worthy of going to Thy children on a mission of Thine?" The Holy One then answered: *Thou hast loved righteousness* (Ps. 45:8), thou hast loved to make out thy kinfolk righteous and hated to make them out wicked. *Therefore God, [I] thy God, have Myself anointed thee* (*ibid.*). As thou livest, no prophet before thee ever began to prophesy except through another prophet. As Scripture tells, *The spirit of Elijah rested on Elisha* (2 Kings 2:15). The spirit of Moses rested on the seventy elders: *The Lord . . . took of the spirit that was on him, and put it upon the seventy elders* (Num. 11:25). But thou alone wilt prophesy from the mouth of the Divine Power, so that thou canst say, *The spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me* (Isa. 61:1). Nay more: all other Prophets who prophesied used single terms in their prophecies;²⁴ but thou wilt prophesy in double terms, [thus revealing that thou prophesiest with a double portion of the Divine Power]: *Comfort ye, comfort ye* (Isa. 40:1); *Awake, awake* (Isa. 51:9); *Awake, awake* (Isa. 51:17); *I, even I* (Isa. 51:12); *Rejoicing, I will rejoice* (Isa. 61:10).

22. Parma MS margin emends "set aside."

23. Apparently the commentator construes "Micah" as *Mucah* (*Mukkeh*), "one who is smitten." Cf. Piska 33.3

24. "But thou alone wilt prophesy . . . single terms in their prophecies"—parallel in PRKM, p. 270; and Lev. Rabbah M, p. 199.

6. *Oh, that Thou wert like a brother to me* (Song 8:1), was the prayer Israel addressed to God. How like a brother? Like Cain to Abel? But Cain slew Abel. Like Ishmael to Isaac? But Ishmael hated Isaac. [Like Esau to Jacob?] But Esau hated Jacob. Like Joseph's brothers to Joseph? No, for those brothers of his hated Joseph. Rather the other way around—like Joseph to his brothers. After all the evil things they did to him, what, according to Scripture, do you find him saying? *Now therefore, fear ye not*, etc. (Gen. 50:21). He said to them—so taught R. Simlai—You are the head and I the body. Once the head is removed from the body, what good the body? He went on to say: You, the Tribes of Israel, have been likened [in number] to the dust of the earth, the sand of the sea, and the stars in heaven. Would I go wage war against the dust of the earth? If I could prevail against the dust of the earth, I might then hope to prevail against you. He continued: Shall I set myself up as my father's adversary? What he begot, am I to bury? Or ²⁵ as adversary of the Holy One, blessed be He? What He blesses, am I to cut down with the sword? He went on: You, my brothers, are part of the order of the universe—twelve hours in a day, twelve hours in a night, Twelve Tribes of Israel, twelve signs in the Zodiac, twelve months in the year ²⁶—dare I presume to annihilate my brothers who belong to the order of the universe?

He said further: Before you came down to Egypt, the Egyptians treated me like a slave.²⁷ But once you came down here to Egypt, you made known my honorable lineage. If I kill you now, the Egyptians will say, "Joseph chanced upon some gang of young men and declared, 'These are my brothers.' You can see for yourselves that Joseph lied,"²⁸ since after a short time he rose up against them and killed them."

Joseph went on to reassure his brothers still more:²⁹ "Besides,

25. "as my father's adversary . . . to bury? Or"—Parma MS, margin.

26. Cf. Piska 4.1.

27. "a slave"—Parma MS, over the line; Parma MS: "with respect."

28. Literally "that it was so."

29. "If I kill you now . . . to reassure his brothers still more"—Parma MS, margin.

if I kill you now, the Egyptians will say: 'Joseph did not keep faith with his own brothers. How much less likely is he to keep faith with others!'" Hence Scripture says: *He comforted them by speaking to their hearts*^{29a} (Gen. 50:21). Now does it not follow logically that if Joseph, who spoke sensible words, comforting words, to the hearts of his brothers, succeeded in comforting them, surely the Holy One, blessed be He, will succeed when He comes to comfort Jerusalem. *When your God will say, Comfort ye, comfort ye My people* (Isa. 40:1).³⁰

7. *All thy lovers have forgotten thee, [O Israel], they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy* (Jer. 30:14). The words *the wound of an enemy* ('wyb) are to be read *the wounds of Job* ('ywb).³¹ Of Job it is written *The Chaldeans set themselves in three bands* (Job 1:17); and of Jerusalem it is written *The city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans* (Jer. 32:24). Of Job it is written *A fire of God is fallen from heaven* (Job 1:16); and of Jerusalem it is written *From on high He sent fire* (Lam. 1:13). Of Job it is written *So they sat down with him upon the ground* (Job 2:13); and of Jerusalem it is written *They sit upon the ground, and keep silence* (Lam. 2:10). Of Job it is written *And he took him a potsherd* (Job 2:8); and of Jerusalem it is written *The precious sons of Zion . . . how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers!* (Lam. 4:2). Of Job it is written *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends* (Job 19:21); and of Jerusalem it is written *Forasmuch as I will show you no pity* (Jer. 16:13). Of Job it is written *For the hand of God hath touched me* (Job 19:21); and of Jerusalem it is written *That she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins* (Isa. 40:2). Now, taught R. Joshua the son of R. Nehemiah, if Job who sinned had eventually given to him a double recompense,³² so Jerusalem

29a. That is, by appealing to their reason, the heart being in Rabbinic psychology the seat of intelligence. The assertion that his own position in Egypt was linked to his brothers' well-being was persuasive.

30. "Hence scripture says . . . *comfort ye My people* (Isa. 40:1)"—PRKM, p. 272.

31. "The words *the wound . . . of Job* ('ywb)"—PRKM, p. 272.

32. See Job 42.

will eventually be given a double recompense of comfort: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people* (Isa. 40:1).

8. *Surely He stretcheth not out His hand against a ruinous heap. On the contrary, when anyone has suffered disaster, He [offers] him consolation*³³ (Job 30:24). The Holy One, said R. Abin, does not smite a people and leave her desolate. For when He brings disaster upon a people, He tries to console her [by citing comparable disasters]. Thus when God brought disaster to Egypt, He comforted Egypt by referring to a like disaster of Assyria's. [And when Assyria suffered disaster He comforted her] by comparing hers to Egypt's: *Art thou better off than No-Amon?* (Nahum 3:8). [As for Egypt's disaster in comparison with Assyria's], it is alluded to in the verse *Alas for Asshur upon whom fell the rod of My anger* (Isa. 10:5).³⁴ And so the reason that the Ten Tribes were banished first and after them the Tribe of Judah, was to allow them to comfort each other. Hence *Comfort each other, comfort each other, O My people* (Isa. 40:1).

9. R. Berechiah told [in the name of] R. Levi the parable of a king who had a vineyard which he proceeded to turn over to a tenant. When the vineyard produced good wine, the king used to say, "How good is the wine of my vineyard!" When it produced poor wine, the king used to say, "How poor is my tenant's wine!" Whereupon the tenant said: "My lord king, when the vineyard produces good wine you say, 'How good is the wine of my vineyard!' And when it produces poor wine you say,³⁵ 'How poor is the wine [of my tenant]!' Yet good or poor, the wine is yours." Likewise, the Holy One, to begin with, said to Moses: *Bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt* (Exod. 3:10). But after Israel made the golden calf, He said: *Go, get thee down; for thy people . . . have dealt corruptly* (Exod. 32:7). Whereupon

33. JV: *Surely none shall put forth his hand to a ruinous heap, neither because of these things shall help come in one's calamity.*

34. JV: *O Asshur, the rod of Mine anger.*

35. "you say, How good is the wine . . . poor wine you say"—PRKM, p. 277.

Moses replied: Master of the universe, when the children of Israel sin, they are called mine; but when they are free from sin, they are called Thine. Yet sinful or sinless, they are Thine: *They are Thy people, and Thine inheritance* (Deut. 9:29). *Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot against Thy people?* (Exod. 32:11). Why wouldst Thou destroy Thy people? And, said R. Simon, Moses would not move a step until God once again called them "My people": *And the Lord repented of the evil which He said He would do unto His people* (Exod. 32:14).

10. *Your God will keep saying*³⁶ (Isa. 40:1). According to R. Hanina bar Papa, Israel said to Isaiah: Our teacher, are we to suppose that you came to comfort only the generation in whose days the Temple was destroyed? He replied: I came to comfort all the generations. The text does not read "God said," but reads *Your God will keep saying*. According to R. Simon, Israel said to Isaiah: Our teacher, perhaps all the things you say you make up by yourself. Isaiah replied: Scripture does not say that God spoke [to me alone], but says *Your God will keep saying* [so that all the world will hear]. Concerning the phrase *Your God will keep saying*, R. Aḥa the son of R. Ada pointed out that it occurs eight times in Scripture,³⁷ to prefigure the coming of the eight Prophets, namely, Amos,³⁸ Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Micah, and Malachi, who prophesied [concerning what was to happen] after the destruction of the Temple.

36. JV: *saiṭh your God*.

37. The eight places are Isa. 1:11, 18; 33:10; 40:1, 25; 41:21 (twice); 66:9. But except for 40:1, the statements are *The Lord will say*, *The King will say*, or *The Holy One will say*.

38. The Oxford 1 MS, cited in PRKM, p. 278, reads "Nahum" instead of "Amos."

SUMMARY

God the comforter

Israel implored God: "Master of the universe, come and behold Joseph as an example! After all the evil things his brothers did to him, he comforted them. We, too, know that we have transgressed. Nevertheless, *Oh that Thou wert like a brother to me!*" (Song 8:1). And God acceded and set out to comfort Israel (Sec. 1).

When God sent the Prophets to comfort Israel, the words they uttered turned out to be contradictory, so that Zion retorted to each of the Prophets, "Keep your comforting to yourself." When the Prophets told God: "We sought to comfort Zion, but she would not heed," God replied: "Come with Me. You and I shall go to her and comfort her" (Sec. 2). According to another comment, God Himself required comforting (Sec. 3).

True, Jeremiah spoke in prophecy of Israel's suffering, but then Isaiah came and spoke in prophecy of healing for Israel. For illustration of the comforting that came to Israel and also of the suffering that can befall her, two stories are told of the siege of Jerusalem (Sec. 4).

*Comfort ye, comfort ye My
people, saith your God (Isa. 40:1).²*

1. <These words are to be considered in the light of the prayer that Israel addressed to God *Oh that Thou wert like a brother to me* (Song 8:1). Like what brother? Not like Cain to Abel—

1. What is here designated as Piska 29/30B is Piska 29.6–9 in the Breslau edition. But since the theme of the four sections is both different and distinct, I follow Friedmann in giving them a separate designation.

2. Isa. 40 is read as the haftarah on the first Sabbath following the Ninth of Ab.

Cain slew Abel. And not like Ishmael to Isaac—Ishmael hated Isaac. Nor like Esau to Jacob—Esau hated Jacob. Nor like Joseph's brethren to Joseph—Joseph's brethren hated Joseph. The prayer can only mean like Joseph to his brethren. After all the evil things which they did to him, what does Scripture quote him as saying? *Now therefore fear ye not; I will sustain you, and your little ones*, etc. (Gen. 50:21). And he went on to comfort them, saying to them things which found ready entrance to their hearts. He said: If ten lamps could not extinguish one lamp, how can one lamp extinguish³ ten? *And he comforted them, and spoke to their heart (ibid.)*.

So Israel implored God: Master of the universe, come and behold Joseph! After all the evil things which his brothers did to him, he rose up and comforted them and spoke to their hearts. We too know that we destroyed our Temple with our evil deeds, slew our Prophets, and transgressed all the commandments in the Torah: nevertheless, *Oh that Thou wert like a brother to me!* The prophet Asaph also prayed: *Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, lead Thou the flock like Joseph*⁴ (Ps. 80:2). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: You entreat Me with the example of Joseph, and so I shall be like Joseph to you. What did Joseph do for his brothers? He comforted them and spoke to their hearts. So [I speak] to you: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God, speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem* (Isa. 40:1-2).

2. Another comment: *Comfort ye, comfort ye*. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *How then comfort ye me in vain? As for the words that you claim you bring back from God, all that I see remaining of them is ma'al*⁵ (Job 21:34). R. Abba bar Kahana and our Masters of the South differed concerning the meaning of the last word. According to R. Abba bar Kahana, to Job it meant faithlessness, as in the verse "And commit

3. Friedmann's interpolation, which follows MC's suggestion and parallel in B.Meg 16a, is sustained in part by Parma MS.

4. JV: *Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock*.

5. JV: *And as for your answers, there remaineth only faithlessness (ma'al)*.

an act of faithlessness (*ma'al*) against the Lord" (Lev. 5:21);⁶ while according to our Masters of the South, to Job the words that his friends claimed to have brought back from God were contradictory: the first did not square with the last, and the last did not square with the first. Now how is Job's charge of contradiction relevant to the verse *Comfort ye, comfort ye*? It is relevant because the Holy One, blessed be He, sent the Prophets to go comfort Zion, [and as it turned out their words were contradictory]: Thus Hosea came saying: "Rise up and receive the cup of comforting. The Holy One, blessed be He, sent me to comfort thee." Zion asked: What comfort do you bring me? Hosea replied: What the Holy One, blessed be He, said through me: "Gone is My wrath. Henceforth *I will be as the dew unto Israel*" (Hos. 14:6). Zion retorted: Keep your comforting to yourself. Yesterday you reported God as saying *Therefore am I become unto them as a lion; as a leopard will I watch by the way* (Hos. 13:7). And now you claim He says, *I will be as the dew unto Israel*. Which words am I to believe, the former or the latter? In short, the words you now bring me are vain comforting. Do you presume to comfort me with such vanity? For it turns out that the words you claim to bring back from God contradict one another.

Joel came and said: Rise up, receive the cup of comforting. Zion asked: What comfort do you bring me, and what is in your cup? Joel replied: The Holy One, blessed be He, said through me: When I redeem <you> the mountains will drop down sweet wine—*It shall come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine* (Joel 4:18). Zion said: Keep your comforting to yourself. Yesterday you said to me, *Wail, all ye drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth* (Joel. 1:5); and now you say, *The mountains shall drop down sweet wine*. Which shall I believe, the former or the latter? Do you presume to comfort me with such vanity? The words you claim to bring back from God contradict one another. *I have heard many such things; sorry comforters are ye all* (Job 16:2).

6. See MhG Gen., p. 880, where an anonymous teaching characterizes all prophecies predicting redemption as no more than a pack of lies.

Amos came and said to Zion: Rise up and receive the cup of comforting. Zion asked: What comfort do you bring me, and what is in your cup? Amos replied: The Holy One, blessed be He, said through me: I will restore thy captivity and rebuild the Temple: *On that day will I raise up the Tabernacle of David that is fallen* (Amos 9:11). Zion said: Keep your comfortings to yourself. Yesterday you said: *The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise* (Amos 5:2). Now which am I to believe? *Sorry comforters are ye all.*

Obadiah prophesied concerning Edom; and Jonah concerning Nineveh.⁷

Nahum came, and when Zion asked him, "What comfort do you bring me?" he replied: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to me: Say this to Zion: Thy deliverance is near. Behold, he that is to bring thee good tidings comes leaping upon the mountains. *Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that announceth peace! Keep thy feasts, O Judah, perform thy vows; for the wicked one shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off* (Nahum 2:1). Zion said: Nahum, keep your comfortings to yourself. Yesterday you said: *Out of thee came he forth, that deviseth evil against the Lord, that counselleth wickedness* (Nahum 1:11); but now you say, *The wicked one shall no more pass through thee.* Which am I to believe?

Zephaniah came. He also said: Rise up, receive the cup of thy comforting. Zion asked: What is in your cup? Zephaniah replied: *Sing, O daughter of Zion . . . At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you* (Zeph. 3:14-20). Zion answered: Yesterday you said to me: *I will utterly consume all things from off the face of the earth* (Zeph. 1:2); but now you announce the ingathering of the exiles: *At that time will I bring you in, and at that time will I gather you.*

Haggai came and said to Zion: Rise up and receive the cup of comforting. Zion asked: What is in your cup? [Haggai replied]: *The Lord saith: Shall the seed ever again remain in the barn*

7. That is, these two Prophets need not be considered here, since they did not prophesy concerning Israel.

[unsown]? *Shall the vine, the fig tree, the pomegranate, and the olive tree ever again bear no fruit? [Indeed not!] From this day will I bless thee* (Haggai 2:19). Zion answered: Haggai, yesterday you said to me, *I called for a drought upon the land . . . and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil* (Haggai 1:11). And now you say to me, *The Lord saith: Shall the seed ever again remain in the barn [unsown]? Which am I to believe?*

Zechariah came, and said to Zion: Rise up and receive the cup of your comforting. She answered: What do you bring me? What is in your cup? He replied: The Holy One, blessed be He, said through me: *I am very sore displeased with the nations that are at ease* (Zech. 1:15). Zion said: Yesterday you declared: *The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers* (Zech. 1:2), and so on.

Malachi came to comfort her, etc. He said: *And all the nations shall call you happy; for ye shall be a delightful land, saith the Lord of hosts* (Mal. 3:12), etc. [Zion replied:] Yesterday you said: *I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts* (Mal. 1:10). And now you say, *For ye shall be a delightful land*, etc.

All the Prophets came before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying to Him: Master of the universe, we sought to comfort Zion, but she would not heed. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Come with Me. You and I shall go to her and comfort her: *Comfort ye, comfort ye together with Me,⁸ saith your God.*

3. Another comment: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people.* According to R. Berechiah the Priest, the words are to be read: "Comfort Me, comfort Me, O My people." In the world's use, if a man owns a vineyard and robbers come and cut it down, who is to be comforted, the vineyard or the owner of the vineyard? And so, too, if a man owns a house and robbers come and burn it down, who is to be comforted, the house or the owner of the house? Ye are My vineyard: *For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel* (Isa. 5:7). But Nebuchadnezzar came, and having destroyed it and banished you, burned My Temple. It is I that need to be comforted: "Comfort Me, comfort Me, O My people."

8. The word 'ammi, "My people," is here vocalized 'immi, "with Me."

4. Another comment: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people*. Whatever words Jeremiah spoke in prophecy of pain, Isaiah came with the promise of healing. Jeremiah prophesied pain, saying: *How doth the city sit solitary! . . . How is she become as a widow!* (Lam. 1:1). But Isaiah came and said, I see her as a virgin:⁹ *As a young man espouseth a virgin, so shall thy sons espouse thee* (Isa. 62:5). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *Weeping, she weepeth* (Lam. 1:2). Isaiah came and promised healing, *O people that dwellest in Zion at Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more*, etc. (Isa. 30:19). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *Judah is gone into exile* (Lam. 1:3); Isaiah came and promised healing: *And He . . . will assemble the dispersed of Israel* (Isa. 11:12). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *The ways of Zion do mourn* (Lam. 1:4); Isaiah came and promised healing: *Hark! one calleth: "Clear ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord"* (Isa. 40:3). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *Her adversaries are become the head* (Lam. 1:5); then Isaiah came and promised healing: *And the sons of them that afflicted thee shall come bending unto thee* (Isa. 60:14). Jeremiah came and struck terror in saying *And gone is from the daughter of Zion all her splendor* (Lam. 1:6). And who was her splendor? The Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is written "Thou art clothed with glory and splendor" (Ps. 104:1). Isaiah came and promised healing, saying, I see Him coming: *Who is this that cometh from Edom? . . . This that is splendid in His apparel?* (Isa. 63:1). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *Jerusalem remembereth . . . all her treasures that she had* (Lam. 1:7). Isaiah came and promised healing: *I create new heavens and a new earth . . . and the former things shall not be remembered* (Isa. 65:17). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *Jerusalem hath grievously sinned* (Lam. 1:8). Isaiah came and promised healing: *I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions* (Isa. 44:22). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *Her filthiness was in her skirts* (Lam. 1:9). Isaiah came and promised healing, but in this instance—as R. Joshua ben Ḥaninah pointed out—Isaiah promised it in a verse hard to understand, namely, *When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion* (Isa. 4:4).

9. "I see her as a virgin"—Parma MS; PE: "I see a virgin."

Jeremiah struck terror in saying: *The adversary hath spread out his hand . . . heathen are entered into her Sanctuary concerning whom Thou didst command that they should not enter into Thy congregation* (Lam. 1:10). The Sanctuary was like a king's palace when it is turned over to plunder. Some plunder the silver, some plunder the gold, but the slave goes back to find and wipe out the evidence of his being a slave. So when the Temple was destroyed, there were some who plundered silver, and some who plundered gold, but Ammon and Moab went back seeking the Torah to erase from it "An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord" (Deut. 23:4). Thus Jeremiah prophesied of Ammon and Moab who were forbidden to enter the congregation of Israel to unite with you [that they would enter the Sanctuary]; but Isaiah promised: *Henceforth there shall no more come into thee the uncircumcised and the unclean* (Isa. 52:1). Jeremiah struck terror in saying *All her people sigh, they seek bread* (Lam. 1:11). [O what hunger can do!]

Consider what happened to Abikah the son of Gabyati¹⁰—there is no end to the telling of how great was the might of the heroes of long ago. Would you like to know of the might of Abikah the son of Gabyati? When the foes of Israel came to encompass Jerusalem, Abikah went up to the top of the inner wall. And whenever the foes shot a stone from the catapult and Abikah saw it coming toward the people on the wall, his choler rose at once and he kicked out at the stone and thus sent it flying back. What did the foes do? They shot the stone a little short so as not to strike the inner wall, but to make it land before the wall. Abikah thought, however, that the stone was coming with full

10. M. Güdemann suggests that the name read "Abukah (torch) the son of Nabataeus" and identifies him with one of the three heroes who distinguished themselves during the siege of Jerusalem—these snatched up torches and rushed forth against the engines (see Josephus, *War*, V. 11, 5)—specifically with "the son of a certain Nabataeus from Adiabene, called from his misfortune by the name of Ceagiras, signifying lame" (*ibid.*). See *MGW*, 29 (1880), 132.

In P the words "When the foes came to encompass Jerusalem, Abikah went up to the top of the wall" follow "Gabyati" and are deleted in FT as a doublet.

force, and in his choler rushed forward to send it flying back with his foot. Whereupon he fell between the walls—for Jerusalem had two walls one behind the other. When the men of Jerusalem saw that Abikah had fallen, they were afraid for their lives. But Abikah said: "Do not be afraid—my weakness is due to hunger.¹¹ I am not hurt at all." At once they killed a bullock for him, roasted it, and he ate it. Then he went to the top of the wall and resumed fighting the foes as he had fought them before.

Or consider the story of Miriam the daughter of Nakdimon, who was a widow waiting for the *yaham*¹² to marry or refuse to marry her. And she came from time to time to R. Zadok, [the administrator of her husband's estate], who made regularly available to her the sum of twenty-five *libra*¹³ of silver for her supply of cosmetics, and also provided two *se'ah*¹³ of wine for her Sabbath dishes. [Nevertheless, dissatisfied even with such amounts], she said: "May you provide thus for your daughters!" And when the famine came [during the siege of Jerusalem], her hair fell out because of the famine. When R. Zadok saw her and her father going about the market place, he asked the father: "Who is this young woman with you?" and¹⁴ the father replied: This is the very Miriam to whom you paid out such-and-such an amount regularly, but who nevertheless cursed you.

R. Zadok concluded: May evil come upon me, if I did not see her so famished that she was gathering bran and barley out of the dung of cattle; and so I applied to her the verse, *If thou art not known, O thou fairest among women, it is because thou followest upon the footsteps of the flock*¹⁵ (Song 1:8).

11. Parma MS: *sygf'*, "weakness from hunger"; PE are unintelligible. Šeraḡa Abramson (Nissim ibn Shahin, *Ḥāmišah se'farim* [Jerusalem, 1965], p. 145) suggests *tinba'* (= *tunba'*, Jastrow, p. 1654), which would have Abikah say, "Do not be afraid—I am merely stunned, but not hurt."

12. The brother-in-law who, in the event of his brother's dying without issue, enters his estate and marries his wife (Deut. 25:5).

13. Literally *litra*, which had the content of three eggs; a *se'ah* had the content of 60 eggs.

14. "he asked the father . . . with you? and"—Parma MS.

15. JV: *If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.*

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the children of Israel: In this world, how you have changed through starvation! But in the time-to-come, how you will change through abundance! A person seeing you one day will say: Are these really they? And seeing you the next day will say: Are these really they? Of such change Isaiah said: *Ye shall eat the wealth of the nations, and through their splendor* תַּיִמְרֻ ¹⁶ (Isa. 61:6). What is meant by *tymrw*? Change, as in the verse, "And if he shall change (*hmr*) at all" (Lev. 27:10).

Jeremiah struck terror in saying: *Let it not come unto you, all ye that pass by! Behold, and see if there be any pain like unto my pain* (Lam. 1:12); but Isaiah came and promised healing, *And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion* (Isa. 35:10). Jeremiah said: *From on high He hath sent fire into my bones* (Lam. 1:13); but Isaiah came and promised healing: *Until the spirit be poured upon us from on high* (Isa. 32:15). Jeremiah struck terror in saying: *The yoke of my transgressions is impressed by His hand . . . He hath made my strength to fail* (Lam. 1:14); but Isaiah came and promised healing: *But they that wait for the Lord shall renew their strength* (Isa. 40:31). Jeremiah said: *He hath set at nought all my mighty men* (Lam. 1:15); but Isaiah came and promised healing: *For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord* (Jer. 30:17). Jeremiah said: *For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water* (Lam. 1:16); but Isaiah said: *For they shall see eye to eye the Lord returning to Zion* (Isa. 52:8). Jeremiah struck terror in saying, *Zion* ¹⁷ *spreadeth forth her hands; there is none to comfort her* (Lam. 1:17); but Isaiah came and said: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God* (Isa. 40:1).

16. JV: *And in their splendor shall ye revel.*

17. The commentator arranges the verses containing Jeremiah's prophecies of terror in the order of the Hebrew alphabet from 'alef to pe. Cf. Piska 29/30.2; and Lam. Rabbah 1:23.

SUMMARY

God in exile with Israel, and
Israel's reproof of God

With a view to comforting Jerusalem, Jeremiah sought to liken her suffering to the suffering of other cities that had been plundered, but he could not find one to match. But Hosea, by pairing God with the congregation of Israel, finally gave the Prophets something appropriate to say concerning the plight of both (Sec. 1).

As Israel were being banished, God asked them which of the Patriarchs they would have lead them out. They would have none, and so God said that He Himself would be Israel's companion in exile (Sec. 2).

The reasons for Israel's rejection of the Patriarchs as well as the reasons for God's obligation to comfort and redeem Israel are set forth by means of two stories: one of a heathen who was pursuing an Israelite with the intention of killing him, and the other of Ben Koseba whose head was brought to Hadrian (Sec. 3).

When God appears to comfort Jerusalem, she will reply, "I shall accept no comforting from Thee until I and Thou have reprov'd each other," and will remind God that He did not act like Joseph who readily forgave his brothers. Nor was He mindful of the fact that Israel, unlike the other seventy nations, had accepted the Torah. At once God will concede that He had been foolishly arbitrary with Israel. Then Jerusalem will demand that He make Israel's righteousness known to the nations who had reviled and abused Israel, and God will grant this demand (Sec. 4).

*Comfort ye, comfort ye My people,
saith your God (Isa. 40:1).*

1. These words are to be considered in the light of what Jeremiah¹ was inspired by the holy spirit to say, *What shall I take to*

1. "Jeremiah"—Parma MS.

testify to thy plight? What shall I liken to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? (Lam. 2:13). What did Jeremiah have in mind when he spoke this verse? He spoke it with a view to comforting Jerusalem [by likening her suffering to the suffering of other cities that had been plundered]. Like all the Prophets, he sought a likeness for Jerusalem but could not find an appropriate one. In this regard consider the parable of a man whose wife dies and whose friends come in to comfort him. If he refuses to be comforted for his wife as they seek to comfort him, they say to him: "Was your wife more beautiful than So-and-so's wife who also died, yet for whom he let himself be comforted?" If he is grieving for his son, they say to him: "Was your son any more comely than the son of So-and-so?" Hence you find when the Holy One, blessed be He, brings chastisement upon a city, another one in a similar plight is paired with it so as to comfort it. When God brought chastisement upon Nineveh, Alexandria in Egypt was paired with it as having been in a similar plight, as is said *And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say: "Nineveh is laid waste . . . Whence shall I seek comforters for thee?" Art thou better than No-amon, that was situate among the rivers? . . . Yet she was carried away, she went into captivity* (Nahum 3:7-10). When [chastisement came] upon Alexandria, so as to comfort Alexandria, Nineveh was mentioned as having been in a similar plight, as Scripture says, *Say unto Pharaoh . . . Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon* (Ezek. 31:2-3), but then concludes *Strangers, terrible ones, did cut him off* (Ezek. 31:12). As for the congregation of Israel, however, Scripture found nothing in a similar plight to pair her with, so that Israel turned to God, saying, *Behold, as the eyes of servants unto the hand of their master, as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look unto the Lord our God, until He be gracious unto us* (Ps. 123:2). Thus when Hosea came, he paired God with the congregation of Israel,² [so that in seeking to comfort Israel, at last the Prophets had something appropriate to say]: *Be glad then, ye children of Zion,*

2. See Hos. 2:18.

and rejoice in the Lord your God (Joel 2:23); and also, *I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying* (Isa. 65:19).

2. When the children of Israel were banished from their Land, the Holy One, blessed be He, asked: Whom would you have lead you out? Your Patriarchs? Then I shall raise up any one of them from his grave, and he will lead you. Whether it be Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, whether Moses or Aaron, I shall raise him from his grave, and he will lead you. Or if you would have David or Solomon, I shall raise either of them from his grave, and he will lead you. The congregation of Israel replied: Master of the universe, we do not wish any one of these—only Thee, as is said *Thou art our Father; for Abraham knoweth us not, and Israel doth not acknowledge us; Thou, O Lord, art our Father, our Redeemer from everlasting is Thy name* (Isa. 63:16). The Holy One, blessed be He, answered: Since ye plead thus, I will go up with you to Babylon, as is said *For your sake I had Myself go to Babylon*³ (Isa. 43:14); and also, *I will set My throne in Elam* (Jer. 49:38).

In this connection consider the parable of a king wed to a wife who was with him for many years, but by whom he had no children. He said to her: "My dear, go and get married to another man—perhaps you will have children by him. And when you go forth, take every precious thing that I have in my⁴ house." She said: "If it must be so, I will make a banquet for you, and we will eat and drink, and then I shall take gracious leave of you, so that people will not say: Look you, the king's wife—he hates her, and he has put her out of his house." The king said to her: "Very well." Thereupon she made a banquet, and the king ate and drank until he was drunk. At midnight she summoned her servants, and they rose up and brought him out on his couch to her father's house. When the king awoke from his sleep, he asked:

3. JV: *For your sake I have sent to Babylon*. But see Piska 28, n. 17.

4. "my"—Parma MS; PE: "your."

"What place is this I am lying in?" She replied: "In my father's house." He asked: "And for what reason am I in your father's house?" She replied: "Because of what you said to me, 'Every precious thing I have, take and go forth.' Except for you, [my lord], I have nothing which is a delight to my eyes and a joy to my life." Likewise the congregation of Israel, when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: "Whom do you wish that I raise up out of his grave, to lead you to Babylon?" they replied: We want none except Thee, as is said *For Thou art our Father*. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I will be thy companion, and I shall go up with you, as is said *For your sake I had Myself go to Babylon* (Isa. 43:14).

3. Another comment: *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people*. Why is *Comfort ye* said twice? Because in *Weeping, she will weep* (Lam. 1:2), *weep* is said twice, so the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I shall now comfort you twice, *Comfort ye, comfort ye My people*.

Another comment: The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham: "Go and comfort Jerusalem; maybe she will accept comforting from thee." Abraham went to her and said, "Receive comforting from me." She replied: "How can I receive comforting from you who thought of me as no more than a [bare] mountain, as is said *In the Mount where the Lord can be seen*"⁵ (Gen. 22:14). God then said to Isaac: "Go and comfort Jerusalem; maybe she will accept comforting from thee." Isaac went and spoke as Abraham had. Jerusalem replied: "How can I receive comforting from you, from whom Esau the wicked came forth, Esau who [with the power of the blessing he got from you], was able to make a barren field out of me, as is said *And Esau went forth to the field* (Gen. 27:5), whereby Scripture intimates that his descendants were to reduce me to ashes."⁶ God said to Jacob as He had to Isaac: "Go and comfort Jerusalem." But she replied to Jacob:

5. In Jewish tradition the Land of Moriah, to one of whose hills Abraham took Isaac, is identified as the site of the Temple in Jerusalem. See Piska 40.6.

6. See Sif Deut. 352.

"How can I receive comforting from you who envisioned my obliteration in saying of God's House in Jerusalem *This is none*"⁷ (Gen. 28:17)? God said to Moses as He had to Jacob: "Go and comfort." Jerusalem replied to Moses: "How can I receive comforting from you who have set down in writing the curses and evil decrees directed at me: *The wasting of hunger, and the devouring of the fiery bolt*, and so on" (Deut. 32:24)? Thereupon all of the Patriarchs went and said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Jerusalem will not accept any comforting from us, as is said *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted*" (Isa. 54:11). At once the Holy One, blessed be He, answered: It is for Me to comfort Jerusalem in keeping with what I have written: *He that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution* (Exod. 22:5). Since I set her on fire, as is said *From on high hath He sent fire* (Lam. 1:13), I must comfort her, as is said *For I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall against the fire*⁸ round about (Zech. 2:9).

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I wrote in the Torah, *Thou shalt not deliver a bondman unto [another] master* (Deut. 23:16); yet I turned the children of Israel over to the nations of the earth, as is said *Their Rock had given them over, and the Lord had delivered them up* (Deut. 32:30). I wrote *Thou shalt not entirely reap the corners of thy field* (Lev. 19:9); yet I vented My wrath entirely, as is said *The Lord hath vented His fury entirely* (Lam. 4:11). Indeed were they not diminished for their sins [by My wrath], no creature could ever prevail against them, against Israel.

In this connection consider the story of a heathen who was pursuing an Israelite with the intention of killing him. But he could not catch up with him until it chanced that a snake came along, wound itself around the Israelite's ankle, and brought him down. Then the Israelite said to the heathen, "Let me tell you something: Had not the Holy One, blessed be He,

7. An intimation that the Temple would be destroyed. See Sif Deut. 352, and Gen. Rabbah 69:7. According to the Rabbis, Abraham as well as Jacob was shown the entire unfolding of Jewish history. See Piska 15.2; and MTeh 40:4.

8. JV: *a wall of fire*.

brought us into your hands, you nations of the earth could not have prevailed against us, as is said *Their Rock had given them over*" (Deut. 32:30).

Again, when they slew⁹ Ben Koseba and brought his head before Hadrian,¹⁰ the Emperor said: "Bring me his body also"; and then they found a serpent coiled around his heart. "We did not slay him," said Hadrian, "but the Holy One, blessed be He, brought him into our hands, as written in your Torah: *Their Rock had given them over*" (Deut. 32:30).

4. Accordingly, when the Holy One, blessed be He, comes to say to Jerusalem: Accept comforting from Me, as is said *Open to Me, My sister* (Song 5:2), she will reply: I shall accept no comforting from Thee until I and Thou have reproved each other, as is said *Come, my Beloved, let us go forth into the field* (Song 7:12)—to a place where no business but ours is going on. *Let us lodge among the deniers*¹¹ [of God] (*ibid.*), so that I may show Thee the nations of the earth upon whom Thou lavishest good things, and who nonetheless deny Thee.

Jerusalem will go on to say: "In contrast, Master of the universe, why didst Thou not deal with me as Joseph did with his brothers, as is said *Oh that Thou wert as a brother to me?* (Song 8:1). Think of Joseph—his brothers requited him with evil and wished to slay him, yet when they came under his power, he requited them with good, and himself comforted them, as is said *And he comforted them, and spoke kindly unto them* (Gen. 50:21). Even Shimei the son of Gera brought up the example of Joseph, saying to David: *Therefore, behold, I am come this day the first of all, the house of Joseph* (2 Sam. 19:21). By this allusion to the house of Joseph Shimei meant: 'Surely Absalom and his followers have not given you as much pain as the brothers of Joseph gave him.' Thereupon David received him in kindness."

9. This statement apparently accords with the tradition that Bar Koseba was slain by his fellow Jews. See B.Sanh 93b.

10. "Hadrian"—FT; Parma MS and P: "Vespasian."

11. JV: *villages*; but *kḥfrym*, "villages," may by a change in vowels be read *kḥfrym*, "deniers."

Jerusalem will say further: "Master of the universe, before Thou gavest the Torah to Israel, Thou didst go around offering it to all the seventy nations, no one of which would accept it;¹² it was finally Israel who accepted it. And since it was they who accepted it, how couldst Thou have done to them what Thou hast done?"

At once the Holy One, blessed be He, will accept the reproof from Jerusalem, and will say: I was foolishly arbitrary with you,¹³ as is said *I acted in lordly fashion toward you* (Jer. 3:14). Jerusalem will reply: Master of the universe, is it right that what Thou art saying be kept only between us? Who will let the nations of the earth know about me that I have done Thy will? They revile, abuse, and mock me, saying: You rebelled against your God and you were faithless to Him. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to Jerusalem: I shall speak to the nations of the earth about thee and make known thy works of righteousness, as is said *I will declare thy righteousness; thy works also* (Isa. 57:12). And the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause the righteousness of Israel to be known to the nations of the earth.

In that time Michael, [Israel's guardian angel], and Jerusalem will say: *The Lord hath brought forth our victory; come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God* (Jer. 51:10).

12. See Piska 21.3.

13. So Parma MS, P, Margolioth gloss; FT and W: "I looked at you."

SUMMARY

God's promise of redemption

Even though Jews may take satisfaction in eating after their fasting on the Ninth of Ab, nevertheless sighing for Jerusalem must continue in their hearts until God returns to Jerusalem. In the meantime, the length of the exile makes Zion ask in despair: Can it be, O my Lord, that Thou hast forsaken me? (Sec. 1).

The question seems to blame God for Zion's exile, but Zion herself is to blame—indeed her sins were such that her punishment was less than she deserved. Her inhabitants were guilty of violating many commandments, all of them punishable by death. Instead of following the noble examples of their forbears, all the inhabitants of Zion, young and old alike, chose to follow the ignoble example of neighboring nations and committed loathsome acts of idolatry (Sec. 2).

Despite Zion's transgressions, a number of Prophets—David, Jeremiah, Asaph, and the sons of Korah—raised a cry against God's justice. God's reply to David was that the children of Israel had put Him away from them and had spurned His pleas that they do penance. And His reply to David, Jeremiah, Asaph, and the sons of Korah was that Israel had first forsaken Him.

Jeremiah, persisting, went on to ask His intention about four things—His intention about rejection, abhorring, forsaking, or forgetting Israel. God answered Jeremiah concerning two of these things—His rejecting and His abhorring—by saying: "I have not rejected Israel, neither have I abhorred them." He did not answer him concerning the other two. But then Zion began demanding answers concerning the other two: *Is it that the Lord is forsaking me, that the Lord is forgetting me?* (Isa. 49:14) (Sec. 3). God's answer to these two questions came after He saw what the Tribe of Levi did when Nebuchadnezzar asked them to play their harps before him as they used to play them in the Temple before God. In reply to

Nebuchadnezzar, the Tribe of Levi mangled their thumbs or bit them off, and said to him: "Your iron manacles mangled our fingers. How can we sing?" It was then that God gave His answer to Zion's question: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning* (Ps. 137:5) (Sec. 4).

In further comment, this verse is read as follows: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand be forgotten*, which is God's way of saying, "How can I forget thee? My right hand is held in pawn on account of thee. Even if I forget thee, can I forget My right hand?" (Sec. 5). God's power—His right hand—and the destiny of Israel are thus inseparably joined (Sec. 6).

In further comment on "forsaking," the words from Isaiah are read *The Lord hath caused me to be forsaken* (Isa. 49:14), and are construed as having been spoken in prophetic thanksgiving by the daughters of Zion after God saw to it that the Babylonian generals would not mate with them, and hence could not mar the purity of their lineage (Sec. 7). Despite the evil things Israel has done, God will never forsake her: He will not forget her response to the "I" in "I am the Lord thy God" (Sec. 8). Hence God is described as "lifting His hand" in Israel's behalf—that is, lifting Israel out of physical danger with His hand and also lifting His hand in an oath not to forsake or forget Israel, but to bring redemption and comfort to Israel (Sec. 9).

Redemption and comfort will come to Israel through the Messiah who suffers in every generation for the sins of the generation. Ultimately he will bring back those of the Ten Tribes who were banished and those who were swallowed in the earth. The latter he will bring by means of underground passageways to a place under the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. God will stand upon the mount, and it will cleave open for the exiles, and they will come up out of it. Indeed, wherever there are Jews, they will be gathered up and then will come without effort to Jerusalem. At this great gathering of Israel, heaven and earth will rejoice and Zion will discover to her delight that she is to represent Israel as the bride under the canopy where God and Israel will be united (Sec. 10).

But Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me" (Isa. 49:14).¹

1. Let our master instruct us: After the Ninth of Ab has passed by, is one permitted to partake of every kind of food? The elder R. Hiyya taught as follows: After the Ninth of Ab has passed by, a man is permitted to partake of every kind of food. Why? Because it is as though a corpse had been lying before him, at which time he might neither eat meat nor drink wine; but as soon as the corpse was buried, the mourner might partake of these things.² On the Ninth of Ab, a man is a mourner; but as soon as the day is over, a man may partake of every kind of food. Yet even though we are permitted everything, it is still required that sighing for Jerusalem continue in our hearts until the Holy One, blessed be He, returns to Jerusalem. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: As ye live, I burned it, as is said *From on high hath He sent fire into my bones* (Lam. 1:13); but I shall rebuild it, as is said *Again will I build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel* (Jer. 31:4). Zion said: Behold, how many years I have dwelt in desolation: *I have pondered the days of old* (Ps. 77:6). I have not been redeemed, and therefore I despair. Can it be, O my Lord, that Thou hast forsaken me? Whence do we know that Zion spoke thus? Because of what is written in the lesson for the day: *Zion said: "Hath the Lord forsaken me? Hath the Lord forgotten me?"* (Isa. 49:14).

2. In his discourse on this verse *But Zion said*, etc., R. Tanhuma bar Abba began by quoting the following words: *Wherefore doth one living complain? A strong man about his sins* (Lam. 3:39). Can a dead man complain? [Why then say "one living"?]

1. Isa. 49:14-51:3 is read on the second Sabbath following the Ninth of Ab. See Piska 29, n. 1.

2. See Tos Soṭ, end; and MTch 137:6.

Properly, as R. Aḥa explained, the verse is to be read: Why should a man complain about the One who lives for ever? What should a man who is truly strong complain about? His own sins.

Does any man alive have a right to complain about the Holy One, blessed be He? No. As Scripture advises, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee* (Isa. 26:20). If afflictions come upon thee, go look into the chambers of thine own heart, and thou wilt realize that the inflictions I have brought upon thee are less than what thine iniquities deserve.³ That *thy chambers* (*hḏr*) here means "inward parts" is shown by the verse *The spirit of man is the lamp of the Lord, searching out all the inward parts* (*hḏr*) (Prov. 20:27).

Hence, *Wherefore doth one living complain?* Should he who is alive stand and complain about the Holy One, blessed be He? Compare such a man with one who leaves a deposit with another, and then says, "Give back to me what I deposited with you." Sometimes, however, the other seizes the first for his debts, saying to him: "First give me what you owe me, and then I shall give your deposit back to you." Similarly the Holy One, blessed be He, says to a man: How many things did I enjoin thee in the Torah not to do, and warned thee that if thou didst⁴ any of them thou wouldst be guilty unto death? I said to thee: *Thou shalt not murder* (Exod. 20:13); and if thou murderest, [thou knowest the consequence]: *He that smote him shall surely be put to death* (Num. 35:21). And if thou committest adultery, [thou knowest the consequence]: *Both the adulterer and the adulteress shall surely be put to death* (Lev. 20:10). And profanation of the Sabbath: *Every one that profaneth it shall surely be put to death* (Exod. 31:14). Is it likely that thou hast not transgressed one of these commandments? And if thou hast transgressed any one of these, am I not obliged to take thy soul from thy body? So I would do, I said to thee in the Torah, but I have refrained from doing so to thee. Indeed, though thou leavest thy soul in deposit

3. "less than what thine iniquities deserve"—Parma MS; PE: "in keeping with what thine iniquities deserve."

4. "and warned thee that if thou didst"—Parma MS.

with Me, as is said *In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind* (Job 12:10), I do not hold onto thy soul, but return it to thee every morning. Despite all I do, thou lettest words of complaint come out of thy mouth. *Even though thou returnest [daily] thy spirit unto God,*⁵ *thou lettest words come out of thy mouth* (Job 15:13). In speaking thus, Eliphaz meant: Because of his sinfulness a man should humble himself; instead he cries aloud against the Holy One, blessed be He. *O Jerusalem . . . thy ways and thy doings have procured thee these [invaders who give out their voice against the cities of Judah]* (Jer. 4:14-18). *The foolishness of man perverteth his way; and his heart fretteth against the Lord* (Prov. 19:3). Do you realize to what extent the inhabitants of Jerusalem worshiped idols? According to Scripture, *The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead the dough, all in connection with fixing the exact spots for worshiping heavenly bodies*⁶ (Jer. 7:18). What is meant by *fixing the exact spots for worshiping heavenly bodies*? It is meant that they worshiped the planets, specifically, Venus. And how did they go about worshiping her? Whoever had a house with a banquet room—[that is, a house large enough to accommodate a number of people]—used to make a narrow opening in the house—a kind of lookout—which was lined up exactly toward the east, so that when Venus, the morning star, rose, he might get up and worship it.

It was in reference to this practice that Ezekiel said: *Son of man, hast thou seen what the elders of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers whence he has his lookout?*⁷ (Ezek. 8:12). What is implied by the words *Hast thou seen?* Even as a man says to his fellow, "Have you seen what Such-and-such has done to me in plain sight?" so the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Ezekiel, *Hast thou seen?* By which He meant that if you suppose they worshiped Venus in secret, noth-

5. JV: *That thou turnest thy spirit against God.*

6. JV: *to make cakes to the queen of heaven.* See Jastrow, p. 617a. The commentator interprets *kwn*, "cake," as "fixing the exact spot," and *mlkt*, "queen," as though spelled *ml'kt*, "machinery [of heaven]"—hence "heavenly bodies."

7. So apparently rendered here. JV: *from the chambers of his imagery.*

ing of the kind! They used to make public display of themselves, like a certain Nazirite, who, as his hair was being yanked, was asked: "Why is your hair so long?" and who⁸ replied proudly that he was a Nazirite. Likewise the people of Jerusalem used to worship Venus⁹ in plain sight and not in secret places. It was of this worship that Jeremiah said: *The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire . . . in connection with fixing the exact spots for worshipping heavenly bodies.*

Zion replied to God: But were not the children only following the example of children [in neighboring nations]? And the women the example of women [in neighboring nations]? And the fathers the example of fathers [in neighboring nations]? God replied: Yes, the children followed bad example, the fathers followed bad example, and the women followed bad example. You rose up and substituted bad example for the good example of your fathers. For example, Abraham: when I told him to bring his son Isaac, he did not hold back. And Isaac carried sticks of wood like a man carrying his cross. Sarah, when the angels came to bring her good tidings, set all her maidservants to one side, and herself kneaded and baked cakes. Isaac, the son of Abraham, carried the fagots upon which he would be presented as an offering before Me. But as for you—your children gather fagots for idols. Abraham was a father who took the fire and the knife [in honor of God]. But you, the fathers, kindle the fire for idols. Sarah was a woman who kneaded and made cakes for angels. But you women knead dough to make cakes to the queen of heaven.¹⁰ Instead of substituting bad example for good, why do you not act as your forbears did? And after all the sinful things you have done, Zion presumes to complain on your behalf, saying *The Lord hath forsaken me!*

3. Another comment: *But Zion said: The Lord hath forsaken me.* Four Prophets—David, Jeremiah, Asaph, and the sons of

8. "who"—FT; Parma MS and P: "they."

9. "Venus"—FT; Parma MS and P: "stars."

10. "to the queen of heaven"—Parma MS.

Korah—raised a cry against the measure of God's justice. David cried: *Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord? Why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?* (Ps. 10:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, answered David: Alas, David, thou art a bad neighbor. A bad neighbor takes account of [his neighbor's] income but not of his expenses. <The children of Israel, [upon whom I have expended so much], have put Me at a great distance from them,> and yet thou hast the effrontery to say, *Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?* R. Jonathan said: During the three and a half years that the foes encompassed Jerusalem, the Presence stood on the Mount of Olives¹¹ calling every day: *Hark! the Lord crieth unto the city . . . Hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it* (Micah 6:9); and *Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near* (Isa. 55:6); but the children of Israel did not even try to do penance. Hence God says: Thou hast the effrontery to say, *Why standest Thou afar off, O Lord?*

Jeremiah also stood up and said: *Wherefore? Wilt Thou forget us ever, and forsake us for length of days?* (Lam. 5:20). The Holy One, blessed be He, asked Jeremiah: But was it first I who forsook them? It was they who forsook Me, as is said *They have forsaken the Lord, they have contemned the Holy One of Israel* (Isa. 1:4). Yet thou sayest: *Wherefore? Wilt Thou forget us for ever, and forsake us for length of days?*

Asaph also said: *Why, O God, hast Thou cast us off for ever? Why doth Thine anger smoke against the flock of Thy pasture?* (Ps. 74:1). The Holy One, blessed be He, asked Asaph: Alas, Asaph, did I first cast them off? They cast Me off, as is said *Israel hath cast off that which is good* (Hos. 8:3), that is, cast off the Holy One, blessed be He, of whom it is said *The Lord is good to all* (Ps. 145:9).

The sons of Korah also said: *Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face?* (Ps. 44:25). <The Holy One, blessed be He, replied:> Was

11. Of the ten stages in God's reluctant withdrawal from the Holy of Holies, the Temple, and the city of Jerusalem, the last was the Mount of Olives (see PRKM, pp. 234-35), beyond which the city of Jerusalem could no longer be seen.

it first I who hid My face? They hid their faces first: *Our fathers . . . have shut up the doors of the porch, have shut up and put out the lamps, have turned away from the habitation of the Lord and turned their backs*¹² (2 Chron. 29:6-7). Yet ye say, *Wherefore hidest Thou Thy face?*

[At the time God ceased to speak to Jeremiah] and was departing from him,¹³ Jeremiah asked four things of the Holy One, blessed be He. Concerning two of these things God answered, and concerning two others God did not answer. The four things were: rejecting, abhorring, forsaking, and forgetting.

When Jeremiah saw the extraordinary afflictions which the Holy One, blessed be He, made descend upon the people of Jerusalem, he stood aghast, saying: "Is it possible that from now on the Holy One, blessed be He, could ever again return to them?" It was then that he asked the Holy One, blessed be He, concerning the four things. *Wherefore? Wilt Thou forget us for ever, and forsake us for length of days?* (Lam. 5:20), he asks at the end of the Scroll of Lamentations. Jeremiah said to the Holy One, blessed be He, right to His face: Master of the universe, *Wilt Thou forget us for ever? And forsake us for length of days? . . . Canst Thou have utterly rejected us, because Thou art exceeding wroth against us?* (Lam. 5:20, 22). Consider here the parable of a king who had a queen of noble blood whom he loved exceedingly. And because the queen of noble blood knew that the king loved her very much, she used to treat the king's honor lightly by setting aside his decrees. One time the king became angry at her and commanded his servants to come and drag her out by her hair. When the representative of her family who was standing nearby saw what was being done, he went at once to the king and proceeded to say to him: My lord king, tell me something. Are you of a mind to return to her, or are you not of a mind to return to her? If you are of a mind to return

12. MT: *Our fathers . . . have turned away from the habitations of the Lord and turned their backs. Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps.*

13. That is, at the time Jeremiah completed the Book of Lamentations.

to her, then you can do as you like with her, because a man is master of his wife. But if you are not of a mind to return to her, you should divorce her so that she can go marry another.

Similarly Jeremiah said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, *Hast Thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath Thy soul loathed Zion?* (Jer. 14:19). If Thou shouldst be of a mind to return to us, *Why dost Thou smite us, so that there is no healing for us?* (*ibid.*).

God replied to Jeremiah: For My answer go to thy teacher and to the teacher of thy teacher—that is, to Moses, teacher of all the Prophets. This is what I said to Moses at the end of all My angry rebukes of Israel: *And yet for all their contrariness . . . I will not reject them, neither will I abhor them* (Lev. 26:44)—and indeed I have not rejected them, neither have I abhorred them. Thus God answered Jeremiah concerning two things, His rejecting and His abhorring; but He did not answer him concerning the two others. When Zion saw that Jeremiah had asked the Holy One, blessed be He, about four things altogether, namely rejecting, abhorring, forsaking, and forgetting, she began demanding answers concerning the two others. *Zion said: Is it that the Lord is forsaking me, that the Lord is forgetting me?*

4. Further comment on the question Zion asked in the verse beginning *Zion said*: When Nebuchadnezzar came and burned the Temple and banished Israel, taking them into captivity, he allowed no halts for rest in all of the Land of Israel; the Babylonians pressed hard upon the Israelites, who said *We are pursued [with a heavy yoke] on our necks* (Lam. 5:5). And why did they press so hard upon them? Because the Babylonians feared for their own lives, saying: “The God of this nation is waiting for them to repent. It may be that they will repent while they are still in their own Land, and He will then deal with us as He dealt with Sennacherib.” Therefore the Babylonians allowed no halts for rest in the entire Land of Israel. It was only when the children of Israel came to the rivers of Babylon, where the Babylonians felt that the Israelites were completely in their power on Babylonian land, that Nebuchadnezzar allowed a halt.

Thereupon some Israelites turned to food and drink; and some turned to weeping and mourning.

Nebuchadnezzar asked: "Why do you sit weeping?" And he called to the Tribe of Levi and said to them: "Get ready! While we eat and drink, I want you to stand and strike your harps before me, as you struck them in your Temple before your God." The Levites looked at one another and said: "Is it not enough of a torment for us that by our sins we destroyed His Temple? Must we now strike our harps for this dwarf?"¹⁴ Thereupon they all stood up, with one accord hung their harps upon the willows there by the river, and then, putting their thumbs into their mouths, with extraordinary will power they either mangled their thumbs or bit them off.

We know what happened from what David says: *By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept . . . upon the willows in the midst thereof we hanged up our harps* (Ps. 137:1-2). First, the Tribe of Levi hung up their harps upon the willows there at the river edge. *For there they that led us captive asked of us words of song, and our tormentors asked of us mirth: "Sing us one of the songs of Zion." How shall we sing the Lord's song?* (Ps. 137:3-4). Scripture does not say, "We shall not sing," but says *How shall we sing?* Then the Levites showed the Babylonians their fingers and said: Do you know, O Nebuchadnezzar, that in wearing manacles as strong as iron is, our fingers were mangled? Look! How can we sing?

Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: You showed extraordinary will power when you mangled your thumbs. As you live, the answers to Jeremiah's and Zion's questions concerning My forsaking and My forgetting, answers which I did not give to them, I now give to you—in the words of Scripture, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning* (Ps. 137:5). Nay more, because you showed such extraordinary will power in what you did to the thumbs of your right hands, I, too, say, *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand forget her cunning.*

And if one is reluctant to conclude from this passage what

14. See *the lowest of men* (Dan. 4:14).

happened at the rivers of Babylon, one may be persuaded by another passage. To begin with, one finds that the Temple was rebuilt after seventy years. And in the year that Cyrus told them that they were to go up and rebuild the Temple—*Whosoever there is among you of all his people, his God be with him, let him go up* (Ezra 1:3)—then, according to Scripture, the priests, the Levites, and the heads of households rose up to go, as is said *Then rose up the priests, the Levites, and the heads of households . . . to go up to build the House of the Lord* (Ezra 1:5). Yet Scripture, after saying that the Levites rose up to go, surprisingly quotes Ezra as asserting that none of the sons of Levi were there: *I gathered them together to the river that runneth to Ahava . . . and I viewed the people and the priests—and found there none of the sons of Levi* (Ezra 8:15). Actually they were there; what Ezra meant was that they could not make their presence known—they could not strike their harps because their thumbs were mangled. But how do we know that those sons of Levi now on their way to the Land actually knew from previous experience how to strike their harps but could not by reason of their mangled thumbs?¹⁵ Because it is these sons of Levi who are spoken of further on in Scripture as the very ones who had been exiled from the Land: *The sons of Levi . . . that were come out of captivity into Jerusalem . . . who were ancient men that had seen the first House . . . wept with a loud voice* (Ezra 3:8, 12).

5. In further comment on the question Zion asked concerning forsaking and forgetting, the verse from Psalms is read *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may My right hand be forgotten* (Ps. 137:5). According to R. Eleazar haḳ-Ḳappar, God meant: My Torah is in your hands, and the time of redemption is in My hands. Each of us has need of the other. If you need Me to bring the time of redemption, I need you to keep My Torah and bring about sooner the rebuilding of My House and of Jerusalem. [We are inseparable]. As I cannot bring Myself to forget the time of re-

15. Literally "How do we know that some of the sons of Levi who were exiled from the Land were now returning thereto?"

demption, for that would mean that *My right hand [would] be forgotten*, so you are not at liberty to forget the Torah, of which it is written *At His right hand was a fiery law unto them* (Deut. 33:2).

Another comment: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem*. When Israel went into exile, the Presence went into exile along with them. The ministering angels said: "Master of the universe, let the glory of Thy presence remain in its proper place. Demean not Thy presence." The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Were not certain things stipulated between Me and Israel? I stipulated with their fathers that at the time they were well off I would be with them, and if they were not well off My glory would be with them, as is said *I will be with him in trouble* (Ps. 91:15). R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish: You find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, saw the children of Israel [with their hands] tied behind their backs, *He also drew back His right hand* (Lam. 2:3). (Let the reader be content with the plain meaning of the text, [without seeking its deeper implications]).¹⁶ And all the time that Israel are held in pawn in this world, the right hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, is also held in pawn. David said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, dost Thou think that there is no need for Thee to bring closer the time of redemption? Even if there be no such need for our sake, bring the time closer for Thy right hand's sake. How long shall Thy right hand be held in pawn? *O that Thy beloved may be delivered, save Thy right hand, and answer me* (Ps. 60:7). Therefore when Zion said: *Hath He forsaken me? Hath He forgotten me?* the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Can I indeed forget thee? My right hand is held in pawn on account of thee; how shall I forget thee? Even if I forget thee, can I forget My right hand? *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand be forgotten*.

6. Another comment: *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem*. R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama the son of R. Hanina: In the time-to-

16. "Let the reader . . . seeking its deeper implications])"—Parma MS.

come, the Holy One, blessed be He, will prepare tents, canopies of glory for the righteous, each befitting the particular glory of each of the righteous. Thus Isaiah said, *And the Lord will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and a flaming fire by night; but over each [of the righteous] shall be a [fitting] canopy of glory* (Isa. 4:5). Then when it is asked: "What is all this tumult of glory? What is this voice of rejoicing?" the answer will be: It is *The voice of rejoicing and joy at deliverance in the tents of the righteous, [because] the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly* (Ps. 118:15-16). Therefore when Zion asked: *Hath the Lord forgotten me?* the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: I have caused to be written down an account of the glory that I shall prepare for the righteous at your redemption, so that all shall sing My praises at your redemption, saying: *The voice of rejoicing and joy at deliverance . . . [because] the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly*. And yet thou continuest asking: *Hath the Lord forgotten me?* If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let My right hand be forgotten.

In following to its conclusion what R. Abbahu said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish, as quoted above, you find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed the time of redemption to Daniel, what He said finally was: *But go thou thy way till the time be; and thou shalt rest, and shalt stand up to thy lot, at the time of the right hand* (Dan. 12:13). What is meant by *the time of the right hand*? The time when the Right Hand awakes.

Israel said: When Thou redeemest us from enslavement to the kingdoms and deliverest Thy right hand, it will be our joy to sing songs and Psalms on account of the wonders Thou wilt do for us, and for the deliverances Thou wilt give Thy right hand: *O sing unto the Lord a new song; for He hath done marvelous things. He hath gotten Him the victory for the sake of His right hand, and His holy arm* (Ps. 98:1).

Hence [God's power in creation—His right hand—and the

destiny of Israel are inseparably joined], as is said *If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, may My right hand be forgotten.*

7. Another comment: *But Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me"* (Isa. 49:14). What did Zion mean by saying *Lord* and *Lord* again, when there was no need to repeat? Zion meant: Even the two attributes of mercy which in the list of Thy thirteen attributes, in the words *The Lord, the Lord*,¹⁷ *God, compassionate and gracious* (Exod. 34:6), come first, they, too, forsook me and forgot me, "The [mercy of the] *Lord* forsook me, the [mercy of the] *Lord* forgot me."

Another comment: *But Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me"*—that is, He has forsaken His ownership of me, so that among the nations I am as gleanings, forgotten sheaves, and the corners of the field which are deemed ownerless, of which it is written *And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corner of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest . . . thou shalt leave them for the poor and for the stranger* (Lev. 19:9-10).

In another comment, [the word 'zbn̄y, usually taken to mean "forsaken," is read in a radically different sense, "burdened"]. *Zion said: The Lord hath burdened me*, that is, burdened me with many troubles. This sense of the verb occurs in the verse *Thou shalt surely shoulder the burden ('zb) together with him* (Exod. 23:5).¹⁸

In another comment, the words are read *The Lord hath caused me to be forsaken* [and construed as having been spoken by the daughters of Zion]. How so? You find that when the foes encompassed Jerusalem, the daughters of Israel were not distressed by what was happening. On the contrary, they said with eagerness: When will Jerusalem be captured? Being handsome

17. The term *Lord* is understood as describing God in His aspect of mercy: God is merciful though He knows man is to sin; and is again merciful after man has sinned and repented. See B.RH 17b.

18. See U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Exodus*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem, 1953), p. 207.

women, they meant, each one of them: When Jerusalem is captured, I will be somebody.¹⁹ Since I am a handsome woman, a general will see me and make me his. These women are described by Scripture in the verse *That say: Let Him make speed, let Him hasten His work, that we may see it* (Isa. 5:19). What is meant by *that we may see it*? <Read in the passive mood, it means "that we may be seen.">

And so it turned out. When Jerusalem was conquered, all the notables of the kingdom of Babylon took the handsome women of Jerusalem and seated the women beside them in their carriages. But at once the shine of leprosy showed on the forehead of each woman, and the notable cast her off.

How do we know that the daughters of Zion were capable of acting with such vanity? From what Isaiah said: *Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, walking and making themselves appear taller as they go,*²⁰ *and making a tinkling as they go* (Isa. 3:16). A woman who was tall would have two short women, one on either side of her—she made certain she walked between them. Of this trick it is written *Walking and making themselves appear taller as they go*. And what was the consequence of their behavior? It is intimated at once by Isaiah in the verse *Therefore the Lord will smite with a scab (šph) the crown of the head of the daughters of Zion* (Isa. 3:17). By this Isaiah meant, said R. Jose bar Ḥanina, that the shine of leprous scabs showed on their foreheads, the word *šph* signifying a leprous scab, as in the verse "When a man shall have in the skin of his flesh a rising, or a scab (*spḥt*)" (Lev. 13:2).

But according to R. Eliezer, what Isaiah meant by *The Lord will šph* was that as the daughters of Zion sat by the Babylonian generals, the generals saw rank upon rank of lice²¹ come down out of the women's coiffures to the crowns of their heads, so that

19. "I will be somebody"—Parma MS; PE: "I will get my freedom."

20. JV: *walking and mincing as they go*. The word *šf* is apparently taken in the sense of *šf* = *šh*, "float above." See Lev. Rabbah M, 16:1, n. 5.

21. The term *šph* is taken as a form of the word *mšphh*, "clan [of lice]." See Lev. Rabbah 16:1.

the daughters of Zion became loathsome to them. Thus made contemptible, the women were forsaken by the generals who at once pushed them off to the ground. Hence [the daughters of] Zion said: *The Lord hath forsaken me*, that is to say, "The Lord has made me be contemptuously forsaken."

However, R. Hilfo ben Zechar²² said in the name of R. Levi: The word *šph* is written with a *šin*, but is read *sph* as though spelled with a *samek*, so that it has two meanings, "smite with scabs," and "their families"—that is, they were smitten with scabs for the sake of their lineage (*šph*). Why were the women's features marred by scabs of leprosy? To preserve the purity of their lineage—they were children of the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Their comeliness thus marred, the generals would not mate with them, and hence could not mar the purity of the lineage of the daughters of Zion.

The Lord will cause their privy parts to 'rh (Isa. 3:17). R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest, taking '*rh*' not in the usual sense of "lie bare" but "discharge," read the verse "The Lord caused their privy parts to discharge." And when all of these opened and began to discharge blood, the daughters of Zion became loathsome to the generals. Thus made contemptible, the women were forsaken by the generals who cast them off. Hence [the daughters of] Zion said: *The Lord hath forsaken me*, that is, "made me be contemptuously forsaken."

8. Another comment: *Then Zion said: The Lord hath forsaken me*. Zion's outburst was caused by what had just been said previously: *Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth . . . for the Lord hath comforted His people, and hath compassion upon His afflicted* (Isa. 49:13). When Zion perceived that "His people" and "His afflicted" were mentioned, but that no mention of Zion and of Jerusalem was made, she proceeded to cry out, *The Lord hath forsaken me, the Lord hath forgotten me*. Thereupon the Lord answered her, saying: Even as a woman cannot forget her

22. = Zechariah?

sucking child, so I cannot forget thee.²³ *Can a woman forget her sucking child that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?* (Isa. 49:15). Zion then asked: But how is it possible that Thou hast not forgotten me? There is no end to the evils I have done. I caused Thy Temple to be destroyed, and I slew the Prophets. According to R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest, the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: I shall forget thy evil deeds and not forget thy good deeds. *Yea, thy "these" I will forget, but thy "I" I shall not forget (ibid.).* Yea, thy saying of the images of the golden calf "These are thy gods, O Israel" (Exod. 32:4) I have forgotten. [But thy response to the "I" in] "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20:2) I shall not forget.

9. Another comment: *But Zion said: The Lord hath forsaken me* (Isa. 49:14). R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse by quoting the following: *Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thy hand; forget not the humble* (Ps. 10:12), and continued by quoting what R. Phinehas the Priest said in the name of R. Hoshaia: Five times in the first part of the Book of Psalms did David ask the Holy One, blessed be He, to arise: *Arise, O Lord; save me, O my God; for Thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek, and Thou hast broken the teeth of the wicked* (Ps. 3:8). *Arise, O Lord, in Thine anger, lift up Thyself in indignation against mine adversaries; yea, awake for me at the judgment which Thou hast commanded* (Ps. 7:7). *Arise, O Lord, let not man prevail, etc.* (Ps. 9:20). *Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thy hand* (Ps. 10:12). *Arise, O Lord, confront him, cast him down* (Ps. 17:13). Why five times? Four times against the four kingdoms. David, having seen by means of the holy spirit how they would oppress Israel, asked the Holy One, blessed be He, to arise against each one: *Arise, O Lord; Arise, O Lord, [etc.]* But if only four kingdoms, why did he say *Arise* five times? Because David also saw the kingdom of Gog and Magog—saw with what might it would come. And so he proceeded to ask the Holy One, blessed be He, to arise against it, saying: Master of the universe,

23. "thee"—Parma MS; PE: "you."

it is not for us to confront it in battle—do Thou confront it: *Arise, O Lord, confront him, cast him down.*

To understand what is meant by *Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thy hand*, consider the parable of a strong man who was crossing a stream. With him was his son whose hand the strong man held to help him cross over. The current would have swept the son away, but the father kept firm hold of him. As the water rushed over the son's head, the son cried out from beneath: Father, if you had not held on to me, I would have been swept away by the current and would have perished. But what good my not being swept away, if I am still engulfed by the water? If you really want me to stay alive, lift your hand higher, above the water, so that I may indeed stay alive. Similarly David saw the kingdoms of nations as rushing waters: *Woe . . . to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of mighty waters* (Isa. 17:12). Now, therefore, behold, the Lord bringeth up upon you²⁴ the waters of the River, strong and many, even the king of Assyria and all his glory, etc. (Isa. 8:7). When David saw the kingdoms of nations and saw how they would come and overwhelm Israel, he began to cry: *I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I am come into depth of waters, so that the floods run over me* (Ps. 69:3). But if Thou hadst not wanted to keep us and hadst not wanted to turn to naught the nations' counsel against us, we would long since have had no way of standing up against them for a single hour. Now if Thou wouldst have us stay alive, lift us up with Thy hand, and we shall live. Hence it is said *Arise, O Lord; O God, Lift up Thy hand*; and to this the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: I shall lift up, as is said *For I lift up My hand to heaven* (Deut. 32:40).

Another comment: *Arise, O Lord; O God, lift up Thy hand*. Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, remember that oath which the angel swore, *When he lifted up his right hand and his left hand . . . and swore by Him that liveth for ever that it shall be for a time, times* (Dan. 12:7). God replied: The angel did not swear on his own that I would hasten

24. MT: *them*.

to bring the time of redemption to deliver you from the oppressive yoke of the kingdoms. It was I who swore through him, as is said *For I lift up My hand to heaven*. A similar pledge of redemption occurs in the verse *Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you* (Isa. 30:18). *Therefore* here introduces an oath, as in the verse "Therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli," etc. (1 Sam. 3:14). Consequently R. Joshua of Siknin taught in the name of R. Levi: The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Two, yea, three times have I bound myself by an oath to bring the redemption and comfort you, the people of Israel, as well as Zion. *Yet Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me"* (Isa. 49:14).

10. Another comment: *But Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me."* What comes directly before this verse? The passage concerning the king Messiah: *Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time have I answered thee . . . and I will fashion thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people . . . saying to the prisoners: "Go forth" . . . They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor sun smite them . . . And I will make all My mountains a way . . . Behold, these shall come from far . . . Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth . . . For the Lord hath comforted His people, and hath compassion upon His afflicted* (Isa. 49:8-13). It is after this passage that we read: *But Zion said: "The Lord hath forsaken me."* Why at this point? One would have expected Scripture to have done just the opposite. First one would have expected the verse *But Zion said* and then the passage on the Messiah. Why then the order as Scripture has it? [Exposition of the entire passage on the Messiah will show why]. In the verse *Thus saith the Lord: In an acceptable time have I answered thee*, God apparently is standing and talking with the king Messiah. And yet the text goes on to quote God as saying, *and I will fashion thee*, as though the Messiah did not yet exist. How then explain the words *and I will fashion thee*?²⁵ Our

25. "as though the Messiah . . . *I will fashion thee*"—Parma MS.

Masters answered: One could recite endlessly the chastisements the Messiah is afflicted with in every generation in keeping with the sins of the generation, but when the Messiah is no longer afflicted, God will say to him: [By relieving you of affliction] *I will fashion thee*, [so to speak, as a Messiah who will no longer have to suffer], *and give thee for a covenant of the people*.

What is meant by the Messiah's *saying to the prisoners: "Go forth?"* It means that the Messiah will say *Go forth*, and so on, to the Ten Tribes who were separated long ago into three companies of exiles, one which was banished to the [river] Sambation, one banished to the region beyond the Sambation, and one to Daphne near Riblah²⁶ where it was swallowed up, as is said "Israel is swallowed up" (Hos. 8:8).

The Messiah will be *saying to the prisoners: "Go forth"*—speaking to those held in Sambation; and *to them that are in darkness* [he will say], *"Show yourselves"* (*ibid.*)—speaking to those held in the region beyond Sambation. As for those swallowed up in Riblah, the Holy One, blessed be He, will make passageway after passageway for them, and they will find their way underground through them,²⁷ until they arrive under the Mount of Olives²⁸ which is in Jerusalem. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will stand upon the mount, and after it is cleaved open for the exiles, they will come up out of it. As Zechariah says, *And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be cleft in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west* (Zech. 14:4). At that time, Scripture says, *Then shalt thou say in thy heart: "Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have been bereaved of my children, and am solitary, an exile, and wandering to and fro? And who hath brought up these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where were they?"* (Isa. 49:21).

And these three companies of exiles will not come alone. Wherever there are Jews, they also will be gathered up and come.

26. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6, 408.

27. Cf. Piska 1.6.

28. See Piska 31.3.

Behold, these shall come from far; and lo, these from the north and from the west (Isa. 49:12), that is, those who were held in far places, such as Spain. *And these from the land of Sinim* (*ibid.*), these are the children of Jonadab the son of Rechab.²⁹ As is well known, he who journeys in the way is hungry and thirsty. But they shall not be thus: *They shall not hunger nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun smite them* (Isa. 49:10).

Nay more! The Holy One, blessed be He, will lower the mountains for them and make them into highways for them; and so, too, He will raise up every deep place for them and make it level land for them, as it is written *I will make all My mountains a way, and My highways shall be raised on high* (Isa. 49:11).

And when all the exiles will have arrived and been gathered together, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to heaven and earth: Why are you remaining silent? When there was mourning, you mourned with them, as is written *I clothe the heavens with blackness, and I make sackcloth their covering* (Isa. 50:3). Now that gladness has come, stand up and rejoice with them: *Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, and break forth into singing, O mountains* (Isa. 49:13). Why? *For the Lord hath comforted His people, and hath compassion upon His afflicted* (*ibid.*). Note that Scripture does not say here, "For the Lord hath comforted Zion." And so when Zion sees that the exiles are gathered and that all of Israel, as well as heaven and earth, are joyful, while she is not even mentioned, she will proceed to say at that particular point in the text which we have noted: "*The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me.* Yea, He hath forgotten me. Behold, all are gathered up, while I am not even mentioned."³⁰ The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to her: Can there be a bridal canopy without a bride? *Lift up thine eyes*

29. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6, 409.

30. The words "She proceeded to say, He hath indeed forgotten me. *And Zion said: 'The Lord hath forsaken me, and the Lord hath forgotten me,'*" which follow in P, are deleted, as in Parma MS.

round about, and behold: All these gather themselves together, and come to thee. As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and gird thyself with them as a bride (Isa. 49:18).

SUMMARY

The comforting and re-
building of Jerusalem

The cry *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?* (Ps. 4:3) is first construed as David's reproach to Doeg and Ahithophel, and then as God's reproach to the nations of the earth, for ultimately He was to vindicate David as well as the people of Israel (Sec. 1).

But before her vindication, Israel is to suffer because she has been poor in knowledge of Torah, poor in performance of good works, and poor in righteous men. Jerusalem will be razed to its foundations, and Israel will be tossed about as in a tempest. Still, the very description of Jerusalem as *not comforted* (Isa. 54:11) holds the promise that she is to be comforted (Sec. 2).

When comforting comes to Jerusalem, her walls will be beautifully ornamented and strengthened. The gleam of precious stones will illumine Jerusalem, and the great gate of the Temple will be hollowed out of a pearl of purest ray. Indeed, precious stones will be as common as pebbles and will serve to mark the borders of Jerusalem. Because of such abundance, as well as the abundance of men and women who love God's law, peace in the world will also be abundant (Sec. 3/4).

*O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest,
and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones
in stibium, and set¹ thy foundations with sapphires,
etc. (Isa. 54:11).²*

1. JV: *I will set thy stones in fair colors, and lay.* See Piska 32.3.

2. In the cycle of the seven Sabbaths of Consolation, Isa. 54:1-10 is the haftarah read on the third Sabbath following the Ninth of Ab.

1. Scripture says, *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will you take pleasure in vanity? You expect the loss to continue for ever.*³ But know that the Lord hath set apart for Himself one that He favoreth; the Lord will hear when I call unto Him (Ps. 4:3-4). David used the phrase *sons of men*, a way of addressing distinguished persons, because he was addressing Doeg and Ahithophel.⁴ *O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame?*—that is, how long will you make little of my glory and not call me by my own name, but refer to me only as “the son of Jesse”: *Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse?* (1 Sam. 20:27), *I saw the son of Jesse* (1 Sam. 22:9), and *Will the son of Jesse give every one of you fields and vineyards?* (1 Sam. 22:7). Have I no name of my own? *How long will you take pleasure in vanity?* (Ps. 4:3)—that is, how long will you take pleasure in dashing madly about with vain words, saying of me, “The Holy One, blessed be He, has abandoned him, forgotten him; henceforth kingship will never return to him”? *You expect the loss to continue for ever. But know that the Lord hath set apart for Himself one that He favoreth; the Lord will hear when I call unto Him.* David meant: Long ago, God gladdened me with good tidings through Nathan the prophet who told me, *The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die* (2 Sam. 12:13).

A different comment: *O ye sons of the man, how long will ye turn My glory into shame?* Here the nations of the earth are addressed; they are called *sons of the man* because they are descendants of the children’s children of Noah, “Noah [who] was a righteous and blameless man” (Gen. 6:9). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the nations of the world: O wicked ones, *How long will ye turn My glory into shame?* “Glory” here refers

3. Interpreting *kazab*, “falschood,” in the sense of *’akzab*, “failing, drying up,” and thus “loss of throne.” As for the word *selah*, in Rabbinic exegesis it is usually translated “for ever” (cf. B.Er 54a). JV: *and seek after falschood. Selah.*

4. Doeg was head of the Sanhedrin, and Ahithophel was a great scholar. See MTeh 4:8. In Ps. 62:10, where the phrase [*sons of*] *men* is also paired with the same word *kazab*, the context requires that it be interpreted as *men of high degree* (so JV, in contrast with the preceding: *men of low degree*).

to the Temple, as in the verse "Thou throne of glory, on high from the beginning, thou place of our Sanctuary" (Jer. 17:12). How long will you make little of it, and put up images and idols within it? *Will you take pleasure in vanity*—take pleasure in dashing madly about with foolish words, saying of Me, "The Holy One, blessed be He, has abandoned the Temple, has forgotten it, and the holy spirit is lost for ever to the Temple." God replied to the nations of the earth: *You expect the loss to continue for ever? But know that the Lord hath set apart for Himself one that He favoreth; the Lord will hear when I call unto Him* (Ps. 4:4). Long ago God gladdened Israel with good tidings through Isaiah who said: *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones in stibium, and set thy foundations with sapphires.*

2. In another comment, Isaiah's words are read *O thou poor, tossed with tempest* (Isa. 54:11)—poor, that is, in knowledge of Torah, poor in [the performance of] commandments and good works, poor in righteous men. *Tossed*⁵—that is, tossed hither and thither—Israel whom the nations of the earth toss about, as is said in the verse *Remember, O Lord, and hold against the children of Edom the day of Jerusalem [s destruction, the day] they said: Toss [Israel] hence, toss them hence, every last one of them*⁶ (Ps. 137:7).

R. Abba bar Kahana and R. Levi Berabbi differed concerning the meaning of 'aru, 'aru, previously read "toss." One said it meant "rase it, rase it"; the other said it meant "empty it, empty it." He who said it meant "rase it, rase it" cited the verse *The broad walls of Babylon shall be rased* ('ar'er) (Jer. 51:58). He who said it meant "empty it, empty it" cited the verse *And she hastened and emptied* (tē'ar) *her pitcher into the trough* (Gen. 24:20). According to him who said it meant "rase it," the verse in the Psalm

5. The word *s'rh* is read as though spelled *s'rh*, and linked with the stem 'rr, "toss hither and yon." *S'rh* is thus taken to mean "which is tossed," the *s* being regarded as the relative particle.

6. JV: *the day of Jerusalem; who said: Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.*

implies that the Edomites rased the city to its foundations [and stopped there]. But according to the other who said it meant "empty it, empty it," the verse in the Psalm implies that [in plundering the city] they took away its very foundations.

Another comment: *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and is not comforted* (Isa. 54:11). R. Levi taught: Whenever Scripture says "There is not," it is implied that the alternative will be. Thus Scripture says, *She is Zion, there is not one that careth for her* (Jer. 30:17); but then one will come who does care: *And a redeemer will come to Zion* (Isa. 59:20). Again, *Sarai was barren; she had not a child* (Gen. 11:30); but then she did have a child: *And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son* (Gen. 21:2). Likewise, *Peninnah had children, but Hannah had not children* (1 Sam. 1:2); but then Hannah did have children: *And she conceived, and bore three sons* (1 Sam. 2:21). Finally, Zion is addressed, *Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear, break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail* (Isa. 54:1), for she will travail and bear: *Then shalt thou, [Zion], say in wonderment: "Who hath begotten me these?"* etc. (Isa. 49:21).

3/4. *Behold, I will lay thy stones in stibium* (Isa. 54:11)—with black stibium [as cement for the white stones in the walls, to make them look whiter], explains R. Abba bar Kahana, [even as powdered stibium is applied to eyelids so that the white of the eye will look whiter and the eyes more beautiful]: "With stibium she painted her eyes, and then attired her head" (2 Kings 9:30). *And set thy foundations with sapphires* (Isa. 54:11), [to make the foundations more durable]. The story of a man who went up to Rome to sell a sapphire shows how hard sapphire is. The buyer made the purchase of the sapphire contingent upon his testing it. He took it, laid it on an anvil, and struck it with a hammer. The anvil split, the hammer was smashed, but the sapphire was in no way diminished.⁷

7. The sapphire, a crystalline mineral, is second in hardness only to the diamond. Nevertheless, if subjected to the test mentioned above, it would shatter, even as a diamond would. I thank my friend Albert M. Schaler for this information.

*And the turrets upon thy walls I shall make of kadkod, and thy gates of gems hollowed out*⁸ (Isa. 54:12). According to R. Abba bar Kahana, *kadkod* means "this and that,"⁹ and thus it indicates that the stones of which the turrets are made will be stibium and sapphires. According to R. Joshua ben Levi, who reads the verse *And luminaries to give thee light*¹⁰ *I shall make of kadkod*, the luminaries will be made of "kadkedony"—chalcedony,¹¹ that is.

R. Joshua ben Levi stood with [the prophet] Elijah on Mount Carmel. He said to Elijah: Will you not show me these stones of chalcedony, show me what they look like? Elijah said: "Yes," and contrived a miracle in order to show them to R. Joshua ben Levi. It so happened that a ship which was then sailing in the Great Sea was seized by a gale and tossed about from the top of the waves to the sea bottom. On the ship there was a Jewish lad to whom the good Elijah appeared. He said to the lad: "If you will do an errand for me, I will save this vessel for your sake." The lad said: "Very well." Elijah said: "Go and show R. Joshua ben Levi who lives in the great city of Lydda the stones of *kadkod* [that you can pick up from the sea bottom]."¹² But do not show them <to him> in Lydda itself. Take him to the cave of Lydda and there show them to him." The lad went and said to R. Joshua ben Levi: "Follow me." He took him to the cave and when he showed the stones to him, at once all of Lydda was illuminated by their light. According to R. Isaac, when R. Joshua ben Levi saw the precious stones, he was so startled that he let them fall to the ground and they disappeared.¹³

8. JV: *and thy gates of carbuncles*. But see below, p. 625.

9. *Kadkod*, which occurs only twice in the Bible, can be read *kad kad*, "this and that." See MTeh 87:1.

10. The word *šmš* may mean "sun" and so "luminary," as well as "battlement, pinnacle, turret."

In the messianic time precious stones would thus take the place of the sun in illuminating Jerusalem. See Exod. Rabbah 15:21, and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4, 221.

11. "In all ages chalcedony has been the stone most used by the gem engraver, and many colored varieties, described under special headings, are still cut and polished as ornamental stones" (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, s.v.). Some of its varieties are agate, carnelian, onyx, and sardonyx.

12. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6, 333.

13. "that he let them fall to the ground and they disappeared"—so Parma MS and SPR; PE: "he was so startled that he was cut off."

And so, according to R. Joshua ben Levi, the phrase in Isaiah is read *luminaries to give thee light*, not "turrets" but sources of illumination for people to see by.

*And thy gates of gems hollowed out,*¹⁴ *and all thy borders of precious stones* (Isa. 54:12). Just what is meant by this verse? That the Holy One, blessed be He, will hollow the great gate of the Temple together with its two wickets from a gem, a pearl of purest ray.

R. Johanan sat in his chair expounding: The Holy One, blessed be He, will hollow the great gate of the Temple and the two wickets out of one gem. A certain man, a traveling merchant, who was present, said: What is this person, in a teacher's chair no less, expounding and saying?¹⁵ That the Holy One, blessed be He, will hollow the great gate of the Temple and its two wickets from a gem, a pearl of purest ray? Why, you cannot find a pearl even as large as a pigeon's egg.

The merchant then sailed upon the Great Sea, and his ship sank to the bottom of the sea. But the Holy One, blessed be He, gave light to his eyes, and there he saw ministering angels hollowing and shaping a pearl. He asked them: "What is this for?" They replied: "For the great gate of the Temple."

A year later,¹⁶ he returned and found R. Johanan sitting in his chair and expounding that the Holy One, blessed be He, would hollow the great gate of the Temple with its two wickets out of a gem, a pearl of purest ray. The man said: "Expound away! It is fitting that you should expound." R. Johanan asked: "What have you seen that now makes you speak in such approval of me?" The man replied: "Had I not beheld with mine own eyes what you are talking about, I still would not believe you." What did R. Johanan do? He lifted his eyes and looked at the man—in that instant the man turned into a heap of bones.

<And all thy borders of precious stones. Because borders [of

14. The commentator interprets *kdh* in the sense of "to bore, hollow out," and not in the sense of "kindle" (hence "carbuncle," as in JV). See Rashi on B.Sanh 100a.

15. "A certain man . . . and saying"—Parma MS; PE: "A certain man sat there expounding [in mockery]."

16. Presumably when the same haftarah was read again.

land] are marked with stones and cistus¹⁷ in this world, whereas the borders of Jerusalem will be marked with gems and pearls of purest ray in the time-to-come, therefore it is said *And all thy borders of precious stones.*> In this world, when a man owes money to another, they go to a judge, who at times succeeds in making peace between them, and at times does not succeed in making peace between them. But in the days of the Messiah, when a man owes money to another, he will say: Come, let us go, and let us try our case before the king Messiah. Upon reaching the boundary of Jerusalem and finding it all marked out with gems and pearls of purest ray, one will take a gem and give it to the other, saying: "Do I owe you more than the value of this?" And the other will say: "The king [Messiah] will forgive you [for taking what is his]." Hence it is written *He maketh peace by means of thy borders* (Ps. 147:14).

[Because of the gems and pearls of purest ray, the time of the Messiah is] four times referred to in Scripture as a time of abundant peace: *Abundant peace shall have they that love Thy law* (Ps. 119:165); *In his days shall the righteous flourish; and abundance of peace, till the moon be no more* (Ps. 72:7); *And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and abundant shall be the peace of thy children* (Isa. 54:13); *The humble shall inherit the land, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace* (Ps. 37:11). Hence it is said *He maketh peace by means of thy borders*—[that is, thy borders of gems and pearls].

17. A shrubby plant, with deep and straight roots, used for hedges to mark boundaries. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4, 15-16.

SUMMARY

God's comforting of Israel

A man who recites the *Tēfillah* is urged to fix the meditation of his heart upon that which is within the Holy of Holies, namely God. It is therefore dismaying that He who is within the Holy of Holies should have reduced the Temple to ashes. God assures Israel, however, that when He comforts Israel He Himself will rebuild the Temple (Sec. 1).

In connection with God's comforting of Israel, Job's conduct as judge and enforcing officer is described—scrupulous in issuing his decrees, unhesitating in his enforcement of them. But he never thought of himself as too important a man to bother with the deprived and the bereaved. Indeed not, for he followed the example of God, who from the heights of His Glory said that He would comfort Israel (Sec. 2).

The words *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:2), considered in the light of the verse *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows* (Ps. 45:8), are taken as alluding to Moses, to Aaron, and finally to Isaiah. For, like Moses and Aaron, Isaiah was *anointed . . . with the oil of gladness above [his] fellows*: his was the privilege of uttering more prophecies, particularly more prophecies of comfort, than all the other Prophets; his, too, was the privilege of prophesying with a double portion of Divine Power, as is shown by the fact that he uttered his prophecies in double terms: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12) (Sec. 3).

The words which follow, namely, *Who art thou that . . . art afraid of a little man that shall die?* (*ibid.*) are then construed as giving comfort and courage to the people of Israel by telling them that their enemies are as ephemeral as a firefly—a fiery, blazing thing at night, but in the morning nothing more than a bug (Sec.

4). The next words, *and hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth?* (Isa. 51:13), intimate to Israel that they are never to despair of redemption as Israel did under Haman, for God swore that He would never cast off the seed of Israel as long as the heavens were still in their place and the earth was still in its place.

The words *his bread does not fail him* (Isa. 51:14) refer to God's maintenance of man in his daily bread, a miracle of redemption from death more awesome than redemption from exile (Sec. 5).

The words *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12), are construed in the light of other verses as intimating that at the very beginning of creation, the king Messiah, God's messenger of comfort, had already come into being; as intimating also the advent of the four kingdoms, instruments of Israel's oppression; and finally as intimating the necessity of contrition as the means of redemption (Sec. 6).

It is to God who smote and to God who will heal that Israel must turn in order to hasten the time of redemption (Sec. 7). The Hebrew word *'nky* ("I") used in the phrase *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* has a connotation of affection, as is demonstrated through a series of Biblical quotations. This connotation of affection, lacking in the commoner form *'ny*, in itself intimates God's redemption of Israel (Sec. 8).

History offers ample proof of God's concern for Israel. Before destroying Jerusalem, God dispatched Prophets with warnings to Israel over a period of ninety years, sending no fewer than two each day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon (Sec. 9). Moreover, when He gave the Torah to Israel, He adorned them with thirteen ornaments and had angels come down with crowns for all in Israel and royal purple for their raiment.

Some of the thirteen ornaments given to Israel are considered to be the materials used in the making of the Tabernacle and the ministerial garments of the High Priest. Others of the thirteen ornaments are considered to be the clouds of glory which surrounded Israel in the wilderness, the two Tables of the Covenant, the Sanhedrin, and the Divine Word in the ears of Israel (Sec. 10). Further proof of God's concern for Israel is that He arranged many meetings with them—in the cloud over the Tabernacle, at the Red Sea, in the wilderness, and in the Tabernacle itself. He also came in

many guises to help Israel—as a mighty man waging war, as an elder teaching Torah, as a bridegroom entering his nuptial chamber. His concern is such that when the Temple was destroyed and Israel was enfeebled, His own strength was depleted.

God's love for mankind keeps Him from administering justice merely by stretching forth His hand and bringing desolation to a nation. If He brings calamity even to a heathen nation, He comforts her by likening her calamity to the calamity of another. Or He has one nation comfort another, as when, having banished the Ten Tribes in one direction and the Tribe of Judah in another direction, He bade them comfort each other (Sec. 11).

The promise of God's comfort is also found in Jeremiah's saying to Israel *Thy breach is great like the sea* (Lam. 2:13), for in the time-to-come, even as God will see to it that the Great Sea's waters are sweetened, so will He see to it that Israel's wound is healed (Sec. 12). Finally, comfort is found in the idea that God's skill is such that he can heal with the very thing He uses for wounding—as Israel were smitten by the lion Nebuchadnezzar, so will they be comforted by the sight of lions as peaceful as lambs (Sec. 13).

*I, even I, am He that comfort-
eth you; who art thou, that thou art afraid
of man that shall die, and of the son
of man that shall be made as grass? etc.
(Isa. 51:12).¹*

1. Let our master instruct us: He who recites the *Tēfillah*²—upon what should he fix his heart? Our Masters taught as follows: "A man should fix his heart upon that which is within the Holy of Holies" (Ber 4:5). R. Eliezer ben Jacob added: If he recites the *Tēfillah* outside the Land, he is to recite it in the direction of the Land of Israel; if he recites it in the Land of Israel, he is to recite it in the direction of Jerusalem; if he recites it in Jerusa-

1. In the seven-Sabbath Cycle of Consolation, Isa. 51:12–52:12 is read as the haftarah on the fourth Sabbath following the Ninth of Ab.

2. Literally "prayer." It denotes the "prayer" par excellence. See Glossary.

lem, he is to recite it in the direction of the Temple; if he is reciting it in the Temple, he is to recite it towards that which is within the Holy of Holies.³

R. Abin the Levite Berabbi taught as follows: In the verse *Like the tower of David is thy neck with TALPIOT (turrets)* (Song 4:4), what is meant by *talpiot*? It means the hill (*tel*), toward which all men turn (*pēniyyoṭ*) while praying.⁴ R. Joshua ben Levi said: *It is the Temple for turning (lpny)* (1 Kings 6:17), that is, it is the Temple toward which all turnings (*pnwt*) are to be made.⁵

And yet after all this praise of Thy Temple, it is written *Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars* (Zech. 11:1); and *From on high hath He sent fire into my bones* (Lam. 1:13). Israel asked: Master of universes, how long shall the Temple be ashes? Hast Thou not written in Thy Torah: *He that kindled the fire shall surely make restitution* (Exod. 22:5)? And Thou who didst kindle it, for it is said *From on high hath He sent fire into my bones*, Thou art obligated to rebuild it and to comfort us—not through an angel, but Thou with Thine own glory. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: As ye live! Thus I shall do, as is said *The Lord doth build up Jerusalem, He gathereth together the dispersed of Israel* (Ps. 147:2). And I am He that will comfort you. Whence do we know He will comfort us? From what we read in the lesson of the day from the Prophets: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you.*

2. *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12). R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: These words are to be

3. So interpreted by Lieberman, *TKF*, p. 44. Literally "he is to direct his heart," etc. Accordingly, the general statement refers to what the mind is to concentrate on, while R. Eliezer's statement refers to the direction in which the worshiper is to face.

4. Apparently the verse in Song is paraphrased as follows: "Thy neck, O Israel, that is, thy stature among the nations, and thy attributes such as Levitical and priestly orders which give thee distinction, indeed thy very life, are linked with the tower of David, that is, with the Temple, whither all turn whilst praying" (Song Rabbah 4:5). Because the meaning of *talpiot* is obscure, it lends itself to homiletical interpretation.

5. "R. Joshua ben Levi said . . . all turnings (*pnwt*) are to be made"—Parma MS and SPR.

considered in the light of what Job was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *And I pried open the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth* (Job 29:17). Now since you find that this Job was an important and wealthy man, and that generally he who is rich does not concern himself with justice for the poor, you might suppose that Job was unconcerned. Not at all! He was ready to give up his life for just decisions in lawsuits. Nay more, he served as judge and served also as enforcing officer, in keeping with the way he construed the Torah, "Judges who are also officers⁶ shalt thou make thee in all thy gates" (Deut. 16:18). R. Eleazar commented: Where there is no enforcing officer, there is no judge. The judge issues the decree, but the officer makes the decree effective.

R. Shabbethai taught: The judge should be as impersonal in matters which affect his own interest as the rod and the lash, and not excite such suspicion of self-interest as to make the rod and the lash be deemed more impressive and honorable than he.⁷

Job used to say: The Torah warns a judge to do justice, and warns the officer that he restore what has been taken by robbery. But, Job would go on, I was not content to be one or the other—I was both judge and officer. And even though an officer stood at hand before me, I did not wait for him to restore what was taken by robbery. But as soon as I issued the decree, I stood over the robber, breaking the grip of his teeth in order to remove the prey from between them: *And I pried open the jaws of the unrighteous, and plucked the prey out of his teeth.*

I chose out their way, and sat as chief (Job 29:25). Job used to seat the judges, indicating to each and every one where he was to sit, while he sat among them as chief of all—king, as it were. *I chose out their way, and sat as chief, and dwelt as a king in the army, as one that comforteth the mourners.*

Another comment: *I chose out their way, and sat as chief.* When the law and the facts of the case were clearly determined, I pronounced judgment; but when the facts of the case were

6. JV: *Judges and officers.*

7. See B.Sanh 8a. I follow Friedmann in his emendation of *kšrym*, "knots," to *kšrym*, "honorable."

obscure, I would make inquiry and clear the obscurity up:⁸ *I cleared their way and sat as chief*. What is meant by *and dwelt as a king in the army*? I used to pronounce the wicked in the wrong, and the guilty as guilty. When I sat in judgment, soldiers of an army squad stood at hand, so that if the guilty man was inclined to evade the judgment, his terror at sight of the army squad standing at hand made him so fearful that he would comply with the decree. Hence *and dwelt as a king in the army*.

And if the Inclination to evil came to lead me astray from going to comfort the mourners, saying that I was too important a man to bother, I did not hearken, but was *one that comforteth the mourners*. Why? Because, I used to say, I am not better than my Creator. The Holy One, blessed be He—no creature in the world dares say that any king lives or endures as He does, or is as great a king as He is, and yet He in His glory comforts Israel, as is said *I, even I, am He that comforteth you*.

3. Another comment: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you*. R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of what David king of Israel was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows* (Ps. 45:8). The words *Thou hast loved righteousness* apply to our father Abraham, but the entire verse has been variously interpreted as applying to our father Abraham, or to Aaron, or to Isaiah.

Thou hast loved righteousness. Thus did God speak to Abraham. For the Holy One, blessed be He, saw all the generations that worshiped idols, [saw] Abraham rise up and separate himself from the generations because he would not be like them; [saw] that while they worshiped idols, Abraham rose up and learned wisdom by himself so that he came to worship the Holy One, blessed be He.⁹ Because God saw the righteousness of Abraham, He described him as the Hebrew, so setting it down in Scripture: *And told Abram the Hebrew* (Gen. 14:13). What is meant by

8. Here a pun is intended on *bhr*, "choose," and *bhr*, "clear up."

9. See MTeh 16:7 and MhG Gen., pp. 202-03.

the Hebrew? That he brooded upon God. For the entire world was on one side and he was on the other side,¹⁰ but he so loved the Holy One, blessed be He, that he would worship Him and no other. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, called him Hebrew, and also called Hebrew the seed of Abraham who loved Him. For, said the Holy One, blessed be He: *Thou hast loved righteousness* and commanded thy children that they also do righteousness—"that they may keep the way of the Lord to do righteousness and justice" (Gen. 18:19).

And, God went on to say to Abraham, *thou didst hate [the] wickedness* of the wicked in thy generations who worshiped idols. And hast thou perchance, therefore, suffered any loss? Behold, ten righteous men, heads of generations, preceded thee, and not one of them had the privilege of being raised up above his fellows except thee: *God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*

Another comment: *Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness.* Here "*thou*" is taken as applying to Aaron who kept hold of the truth, as is said "The law of truth was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips; he walked with Me in peace and uprightness, and did turn many away from iniquity" (Mal. 2:6).

And hated wickedness. At the time the children of Israel did that unspeakable deed,¹¹ the Tribe of Levi was not with them, for they hated wickedness. The Holy One, blessed be He, asked Aaron, [who was of the Tribe of Levi]: And didst thou therefore suffer any loss? *Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.* Behold, all Israel stood about the Tabernacle, eleven Tribes surrounding it, and the Tribe of Levi with the families of Gershonites, the families of Amramites, the families of Izharites, and the families of Kohathites [closest to the Tabernacle];¹² and of all these standing about I did not tell

10. The play on 'bry, "Hebrew," and 'br, "side," is suggested by "he brooded" ("Hebrewed") of the English.

11. The golden calf.

12. "The whole encampment was in the form of a quadrilateral, lying four-square with the Tabernacle in the center . . . Nearest to it, and surrounding it on all four sides as a protecting cordon, were the camps of the Levitical families.

Moses to choose from among them all any, as thou livest, except thee and thy children: *Take Aaron and his sons with him* (Lev. 8:2).¹³

Let us now come to the lesson of the day from the Prophets.

Thou hast loved righteousness. Here *thou* is taken as applying to Isaiah. When Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord cry out, saying: *Whom shall I send?* (Isa. 6:8), it was, so taught our Masters, as though the Holy One, blessed be He, in crying out, were moaning in the very depths of His being: *Whom shall I send?* Who now will take it upon himself to go forth with My message? When I sent Micah, they smote him: *Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near, and smote Micaiah* (1 Kings 22:24). When I sent Zechariah, they slew him.¹⁴ When I sent Jeremiah, they threw him into a pit. Whom shall I send? Who will take it upon himself to go? Thereupon Isaiah began his reply by saying: "Behold me before Thee." He went on to say: *Here am I; send me* (Isa. 6:8). Then he saw the seraphim praising the Holy One, blessed be He, and because he did not join his praise to their praise, he was distressed by his silence, saying: "*Woe unto me! for I was silent*"¹⁵ (Isa. 6:5). Things which it is impossible for a mortal to see and yet remain alive, I have seen and did not die. Why did I not join my praise to the praise of the seraphim? If I had joined my praise to their praise, I would live and endure for ever as they do. How is it that I was silent? *Woe unto me! for I was silent.*" Standing desolate at his lapse, he took it upon himself to say something else. He said *I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips* (*ibid.*). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Thou mayest say *I am a man of unclean lips*—that is permitted thee, because the authority over thyself is thine. But hast thou perhaps such author-

Beyond these and enclosing them was the camp of the Israelites—the tents of the Twelve lay Tribes, divided into four sections, each of which bore the name of its leading Tribe" (see Num. 2, in *PH*, pp. 572–73).

13. Lev. 8:12 refers to the fact that anointing oil was to be poured upon Aaron's head. See also Lev. Rabbah M, 10:3.

14. See 2 Chron. 24:22.

15. JV: *for I am undone*. But see Kimḥi.

ity over My children that thou standest and sayest of them *and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*? At once Isaiah got his deserts, as he himself tells: *Then flew unto me one of the seraphim, with a glowing stone (rṣph) in his hand which he had taken with tongs from off the altar* (Isa. 6:6). The usual word for "glowing coal," *ghlt*, is not used here; the word *rṣph*, "glowing stone," is used instead. What is intimated by the word *rṣph*? R. Samuel bar Nahman explained *rṣph* as signifying "silence (*rṣ*)" ¹⁶ the mouth (*ph*)" [of him] who spoke calumny of My children.

With tongs, etc. [the dual form of "tongs" indicates two pairs]. Why two pairs? To make you realize the power of a righteous man. The Holy One, blessed be He, told the seraph to take a glowing coal from the altar on high and put it upon Isaiah's mouth. And so the seraph took with his tongs from the altar on high a glowing coal, but at once threw the tongs down. Then he took another pair of tongs and picked up the first pair that held the coal and went and put the coal upon the lips of Isaiah, saying, *Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin expiated* (Isa. 6:7). Now consider that although the seraph was an angel of fire, yet when he took the glowing coal with only one pair of tongs, he was so burned that he had to use another pair of tongs: *which he had taken with tongs* (Isa. 6:6)—the two pairs. Isaiah, however, took the coal upon his mouth and did not feel it: *And he touched my mouth with it* (Isa. 6:7).

And when Isaiah understood what had happened to him and why, he began to find righteousness in Israel and to speak in their defense. What is said at the end of his prophecy? *The Lord God hath given me a disciple's tongue, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary; He wakeneth me morning by morning, He wakeneth mine ear to hear what a disciple should hear* (Isa. 50:4). R. Isaac the Priest ben Hama said in the name of R. Hilkiyah who taught it in the name of R. Simon: What is meant by the verse *The Lord hath given me a disciple's tongue, that I should know how to sustain with words him that is weary*?

16. Literally "break" or "smash." Cf. Rashi on Isa. 6:6.

<It means that He gave me a tongue taught to speak openly in defense of the children of Israel.> How does Isaiah conclude this portion of his prophecy? *The Lord God hath opened mine ear* (Isa. 50:5)—opened my ear that I might hear His voice when He said, *Whom shall I send?* And gave me understanding enough to answer: *Here am I; send me* (Isa. 6:8). Indeed, *The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious* (Isa. 50:5). Therefore *I was not turned away backward* (*ibid.*). I was not backward with regard to prophecy; but was foremost in rank¹⁷ among all the Prophets. Undeniably Isaiah was foremost among the Prophets in the number of his prophecies. Furthermore, he prophesied concerning all the nations of the earth: *The burden upon Arabia* (Isa. 21:13), *The burden of Moab* (Isa. 15:1), *The burden of Dumah* (Isa. 21:11). What caused Isaiah to attain such distinction and such glory? His deeming the children of Israel righteous and his speaking in their defense. Therefore David said: *Thou hast loved righteousness*—hast loved to deem His creatures righteous; *and hated wickedness*—hast hated the wicked. Therefore *God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows*. [Thus Isaiah could say] *The spirit of . . . God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me* (Isa. 61:1).

The passages *The spirit of . . . God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me*, and *Therefore God . . . hath anointed thee* (Ps. 45:8), are expounded elsewhere in greater detail.

God . . . hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows: Isaiah was privileged to utter more prophecies than all the other Prophets. Nay more, he uttered more prophecies of comfort than all the other Prophets.

Moreover, his prophecies were uttered in double terms, [thus revealing that he prophesied with a double portion of Divine Power]: *Awake, awake* (Isa. 51:9), *Awake, awake* (Isa. 51:17), *Rejoicing I will rejoice* (Isa. 61:10), *Comfort ye, comfort ye* (Isa. 40:1), and *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12).¹⁸

17. "foremost in rank"—Parma MS.

18. Cf. Piska 29/30A.6.

R. Tanḥuma¹⁹ made use of each of these passages at the beginning of his various discourses.

4. Another comment: *I, even I*. Why is the word "I" said twice? Because at Sinai the children of Israel twice acceded to God's saying "I"—*I am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2) and *I the Lord thy God am a jealous God* (Exod. 20:5)—therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, comforts them by repeating the word "I": *I, even I, am He that comforteth you*.

Another comment: *I, even I*. R. Tanḥuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of²⁰. . .

Who art thou? That thou art afraid of a little man that shall die, or of the son of man that shall be made as grass? (Isa. 51:12). [Ask yourself, O Israel], *Who art thou?* And then ask why you should be afraid. Is it possible that you do not know who you are? Are you not the daughter of Abraham, the daughter of Isaac, the daughter of Jacob?—hence the daughter of the three most eminent men in the history of the world.²¹ And yet you are afraid of an ordinary creature, a little man who is alive today and dead tomorrow—*of a little man that shall die*. Of course you may not know what I did to all who engaged with the three Patriarchs—to Amraphel who first engaged with Abraham by casting him into a fiery furnace. Did I not deliver Abraham, and did I not finally put Amraphel into Abraham's power?²² Did I not act on behalf of Isaac against whom the Philistines and Abimelech engaged, sending him away from their land? *And Abimelech said unto Isaac: "Go from us; for thou art much mightier than we"* (Gen 26:16). Did not Abimelech come back and admit to Isaac that he was wrong, saying *We saw plainly that the Lord*

19. "R. Tanḥuma"—MC.

20. A portion of this discourse, as Friedmann rightly points out, is missing.

21. Literally "the three mountains of the world."

22. SPR: "Have I not strengthened Abraham whilst he was in Amraphel's power?" Amraphel is identified with Nimrod. See Gen. 14, and Gen. Rabbah 42:4; and Piska 18:3.

was with thee (Gen. 26:28)? Did I not act on behalf of your father Jacob, whom Esau engaged, so that Jacob had to flee from him? Did not Esau come back presently and succumb to Jacob's power, and remove himself from Jacob's vicinity: *And Esau . . . went into a land away from his brother Jacob* (Gen. 36:6)? *Who art thou? That . . . art afraid?* The daughter of such men, and afraid? Your fathers—whoever engaged with them fell before them. You, too—whoever comes and engages with you will fall before you.

Another comment: *Who art thou that . . . art afraid? Of man that shall die* art thou afraid? R. Judah the son of R. Simeon said: You are like one who saw a worm which terrified him—what he saw was a fiery thing which we call a firefly. It was said to him: Is this what terrifies you? At night it is a fiery, blazing thing. But when morning comes, you see that it is nothing more than a worm. So, too, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Are you afraid of man? He is a worm: *Man, that is a worm! And the son of man, that is a maggot!* (Job 25:6). How can you be terrified of man? The children of Israel replied: But, Master of the universe, the oppression of the kingdoms is cruel. He replied: It is because this world is night and they have dominion in it. When morning comes, you will see that they are no more than a worm. What morning is meant? The one of which Isaiah spoke: *Watchman, what of the night? . . . The morning cometh, and also the night*²³ (Isa. 21:11-12).

5. *And hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker* (Isa. 51:13). In this verse Scripture is referring to Israel's plight under Haman, when for a time they were so terrified that they gave up the hope of redemption. Indeed, said R. Samuel bar Nahman, Israel would have deserved not to be saved from their plight under Haman because they had given up hope of redemption, had it not been that their despair was like that of their father Jacob in his plight. For although Jacob had heard from the Mouth whose utterance

23. The morning is the time of redemption for the righteous, and the night is the time of oblivion for the wicked.

is divine *And behold, I am with thee* (Gen. 28:15), he still feared Esau: *Then Jacob was greatly afraid and was distressed* (Gen. 32:8).²⁴

Another comment: *And hast forgotten the Lord thy Maker, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth* (Isa. 51:13). What does Israel's plight under Haman have to do with the creation? Israel were so terrified of being taken and put to death and slaughtered that they despaired of redemption. Then God said to them: You have forgotten what I declared to Jeremiah, *Thus saith the Lord: If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, then will I also cast off all the seed of Israel* (Jer. 31:37). You now see the heavens still in their place and the earth still in its place, and yet you are terrified: *And fearest continually all the day because of the fury of the oppressor, as he maketh ready to destroy? And where is the fury of the oppressor?* (Isa. 51:13). True, Haman's decree was promulgated "on the first month in the thirteenth day thereof" (Esther 3:12),²⁵ and Israel were fearful every day *because of the fury of the oppressor*—Haman, "an adversary and an enemy, even this wicked Haman" (Esther 7:6)—but *where is the fury of the oppressor* now?

*<He that is bent down by weakness hasteneth that he may be loosed, that he should not die and go down into the pit, nor that his bread should fail>*²⁶ (Isa. 51:14). What is meant by the phrase *He that is bent down by weakness*? It means: Are you afraid of [a wicked] man, a man so weak that he scurries to find a place to move his bowels lest he die, a man so weak that he scurries back and forth from one place to another lest his bread fail him? Hence what kind of a thing are you that you should be afraid of such a man? Concerning the conclusion of the verse, R. Phinehas the Priest ben Hama asked in the name of R. Hilkiyah who asked it in the name of R. Simon: What is meant

24. Cf. Gen. Rabbah 76:1.

25. I follow Jastrow (1221a) who proposes the citation of Esther 3:12. Parma MS and PE: "from day to day and from month to month" (Esther 3:7).

26. See AV and English RV, and margin.

by *that he should not die and go down to the pit, nor that his bread should fail?* A man dies when his bread fails—if he does not eat, he dies. But even though his bread does not fail him, he may also die, for if he eats and does not move his bowels, then the food he has eaten spoils inside of him and he dies. Indeed a sign that a sick man will not die is that he is still able to move his bowels: *When that which is to be emptied* ²⁷ *is quick to loose, he will not die and go down into the pit.*

Another comment: R. Haggai said in the name of R. Hama bar Abba: How can one tell when a sick man will not die? When his bread does not fail him. But if his bowels are so loose that his bread fails [—that is, does not stay with him—] he will die. If, however, a man's bowels are not sick, so that *that which is to be emptied is quick to loose*, he will not die: *he will not die and go down into the pit, for his bread does not fail him.* In the very next verse Isaiah alludes to the exodus from Egypt to make you realize that the piece of bread which a man puts into his mouth is as awesome as the exodus from Egypt.²⁸ Even as the exodus from Egypt was attended by trials, signs, and wonders, so is man's daily bread.

You can see the proof of this for yourself, said R. Joshua ben Levi; it is something I inferred from the Psalm with the continuing refrain in praise of God's loving-kindness²⁹ (Ps. 136), a Psalm which gives equal weight to the verses *To Him who divided the Red Sea in sunder* (Ps. 136:13), *And brought out Israel from among them* (Ps. 136:11), and *Who giveth food to all flesh* (Ps. 136:25). In thus aligning the bread a man puts into his mouth with the dividing of the Red Sea and the exodus from Egypt, the Psalmist implies that the bread a man puts into his mouth is as awesome as either of these events.

His bread does not fail him. I am the Lord thy God, that divided the sea (Isa. 51:14-15). In these verses, why does Isaiah

27. JV: *He that is bent down by weakness hasteneth that he may be loosed, that he should not die*, etc. But see Rashi.

28. "to make you realize . . . as the exodus from Egypt"—Parma MS.

29. Literally "the Great Hallel."

conjoin the exodus from Egypt with the bread a man puts into his mouth? Because as many miracles as the Holy One, blessed be He, performed to redeem Israel out of Egypt, He performs with regard to the bread which a man puts into his mouth. And as awesome as the ingestion is the evacuation: *When that which is to be emptied is quick to loose . . . I am the Lord thy God.*

R. Samuel bar Nahman taught: Would you know with what grandeur is invested the daily bread which a man puts into his mouth? To maintain a man in his daily bread demands more power than to give redemption. And the proof? You find that when Joseph brought his sons to his father to be blessed, Jacob spoke of his redemption as coming from an angel: *The angel who hath redeemed me from all evil* (Gen. 48:16); but when he spoke of his daily bread, what did he say? He said: *The God who fed me all my life long unto this day* (Gen. 48:15). It was the power of God to give a man his daily bread that Isaiah had in mind when he said so aptly: *He will not die and go down into the pit, for his bread does not fail him. I am the Lord.*

6. Another comment: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12). These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *Thou, who hast made me to see many and sore troubles, wilt quicken me again, and bring me up again from the depths of the earth* (Ps. 71:20). You find that at the very beginning of the creation of the world, the king Messiah had already come into being, for he existed in God's thought even before the world was created. Of his existence Scripture says, *And there came forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse* (Isa. 11:1); it does not say "And there shall come forth" <but *And there came forth*>, implying that the shoot out of the stock of Jesse had already come forth.³⁰

But where in connection with the creation of the world do you find a verse which speaks of the kingdoms' oppression of Israel and of the redeemer, the king Messiah? *In the beginning God created . . . Now the Land was waste and desolate; and*

30. "implying that the shoot . . . already come forth"—Parma MS.

darkness was upon the face of the abyss; and the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters (Gen. 1:1-2). In the word *waste* there is an intimation of the kingdom of Babylon, [after whose invasion of the Land of Israel] it was said "I beheld the Land, and lo, it was waste" (Jer. 4:23). And in the word *desolate* <is an intimation of the kingdom of Media, of whose minions it was said "They brought desolation to Haman"³¹ (Esther 6:14). In the word *darkness*> is an intimation of the kingdom of Greece whose decrees were darkly cruel as, for example, "Write on the horn of an ox that ye have no portion in the God of Israel."³² In the words *upon the face of the abyss* is an intimation of the abysmally wicked kingdom of Edom. When David envisioned the four kingdoms and saw with what might they would come and reduce Israel to servitude, aghast, he said: *Thou hast made me to see many and sore troubles*. By *many troubles* he meant at least two kingdoms, namely, Babylon and Media; by *sore troubles* he meant the two other kingdoms, namely, Greece and³³ Rome. *Thou . . . wilt quicken me again, and bring me up again from the abysses of the earth* (Ps. 71:20). In saying *Thou . . . wilt quicken me*, David was referring to Israel's deliverance from the first kingdom—from enslavement by Babylon. In saying *Thou . . . wilt quicken me again*, he was referring to deliverance from the second—from enslavement by Media. In saying *Thou . . . wilt bring me up*, he was referring to deliverance from the third—from enslavement by Greece. In saying *Thou . . . wilt bring me up again from the abysses of the earth*, he was referring to wicked Edom [—Rome]. But where is the proof that the king Messiah existed from the beginning of God's creation of the world? The proof is in the verse *And the spirit of God moved*, words which identify the

31. JV: *They hastened to bring Haman*. But I follow Mah on Gen. Rabbah 2:1, who suggests that the word *way-yāḥlilu*, "hastened," be read as though written *way-yāḥo bohu lo*, "and desolation came to him." The allusion would thus be to the chaos and desolation which Media brought.

32. Probably referring to Antiochus who demanded public disavowal of Judaism. See Mēkilta dē-R. Ishmael, ed. Friedmann, 71b, n. 12.

33. "and Media . . . Greece and"—Mah.

king Messiah, of whom it is said "And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him" (Isa. 11:2). But when will *the spirit of God* move [to bring about your redemption, O Israel]? When in contrition you pour out your heart like water—*upon the face of the waters*—before the Lord. Then *I, even I, will comfort you.*

7. Another comment: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you.* These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *For He hath torn open, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up* (Hos. 6:1). Israel may be likened to a man who had a swelling which a physician opened up. Now when the man with the swelling saw that the swelling was not healing, he began to go about to other physicians, but they could find no healing for him. Then he was told: You keep going to one physician after another, but they have no way of healing you because they do not know what kind of a swelling you have. If you want to be healed, go back to him who first opened it up and he will heal you. Similarly the prophet said: The more you keep away from repentance, the further off is the time of redemption and the acts of God's comforting.³⁴ Repent, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will redeem you from the oppression of the kingdoms, for He is the One who smote, and He is also the One who will heal: *Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn open, and He will heal us; He hath smitten, and He will bind us up (ibid.).* The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I am He that smote, and I am He that will heal. I am He that smote, as it is said *From on high hath He sent fire into my bones* (Lam. 1:13); and I am He that will heal: *I, even I, am He that will comfort you.*

8. A further comment [on "I" ('nky): The special form 'nky has a connotation of affection that is lacking in the commoner form 'ny]: *I ('nky), even I, am He that comforteth you.* With

34. "The more you keep away from repentance . . . the acts of God's comforting"—so Parma MS; PE: "The more you give up your hope for the time of redemption, the further off from you is comforting."

'nky I created the worlds above, and with 'nky I created the worlds below, <as is said *I ('nky) am the Lord, that maketh all things, that stretched forth the heavens alone, that spread abroad the earth by Myself* (Isa. 44:24).> With 'nky I created Adam, <as is said *I ('nky), even I, have made the earth, and created man upon it* (Isa. 45:12).> With 'nky I spoke to Abraham, <as is said *I ('nky) am thy shield* (Gen. 15:1).> With 'nky I spoke to Isaac: *And the Lord appeared unto him the same night, and said: I ('nky) am the God of Abraham thy father* (Gen. 26:24).

When God appeared above Jacob [as he lay dreaming at Beth-el], He did not appear above him with 'nky but with 'ny, as is said *And behold, the Lord stood above him, and said: I ('ny) am the Lord, the God of Abraham thy father* (Gen. 28:13). Therefore Jacob was afraid: *I knew not God as 'nky*.³⁵ *And he was afraid* (Gen. 28:16-17). Why was he afraid? God did not appear to my fathers, he said, and refer to Himself as 'ny, but as 'nky. Is it possible that some iniquity has betided me, so that God does not speak to me with the same term that He used in speaking to my fathers? When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw that Jacob was distressed about the matter, He began at once to speak to him using the term 'nky: *And behold, I ('nky) am with thee* (Gen. 28:15).³⁶

Then with 'nky for "I" in subsequent events as narrated in Scripture, I went down with Jacob to Egypt: *I ('nky) will go down with thee into Egypt* (Gen. 46:4); and with 'nky brought him up again: *I ('nky) will also surely bring thee up again* (*ibid.*). With 'nky I appeared above the redeemer, [that is Moses]: *I ('nky) am the God of thy father* (Exod. 3:6). With 'nky I created the power of speech which I put into his mouth: *And I ('nky) will be with thy mouth* (Exod. 4:15).

35. JV: *And I knew it not*. See Friedmann's n. 72.

36. Apparently taken by the commentator as God's response to Jacob's vow which follows in Gen. 28:20. See Gen. Rabbah 69:6, and 70:4.

In Rabbinic thought, Jacob is the prototype of the people of Israel who at certain periods of history may believe themselves neglected or even abandoned by God, as evidenced in this homily by God's use of the term 'ny and not 'nky when speaking to Jacob, that is, to Israel.

R. Hama bar Hanina said: A marvelous thing is the speech of the lips—it is held to be equal to the creation of the world. For as Scripture makes use of the term “creation” in describing the creation of the world and the fullness thereof, viz., *These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth when they were created* (Gen. 2:4), Scripture likewise makes use of the term “create” in describing the speech of the lips: *I create the fruit of the lips* (Isa. 57:19).

R. Samuel bar Nahman said: If you wish to know how complicated is the power of speech, consider what the Holy One, blessed be He, created the tongue as capable of doing. Sometimes a man must twist his tongue in order to utter a certain sound; and sometimes he must put his tongue close to his teeth in order to utter a certain sound. And in a single word we find as many as eleven successive positions of the tongue, as, for example, in the word *wk'lylwykm*, “according to your ways” (Ezek. 20:44).

With 'nky I gave the Ten Commandments: *I ('nky) am the Lord thy God* (Exod. 20:2).³⁷ With 'nky I brought Israel into the wilderness: *Therefore, behold, I ('nky) will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness* (Hos. 2:16). With 'nky I shall build Zion: *Behold, I ('nky) will set thy stones in fair colors* (Isa. 54:11). With 'nky I will bring the redeemer: *Behold, I ('nky) will send you Elijah the prophet* (Mal. 3:23). With 'nky I shall comfort you: *I ('nky), even I, am He that comforteth you*.

9. Another comment: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12). R. Tanhuma Berabbi began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *How much more strongly could I have forewarned thee? What more parables could I have given thee?* (Lam. 2:13). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: What forewarnings did I not give thee by means of the Prophets! R. Jacob of Kefar Hanin taught: The Holy One,

37. Cf. Piska 21.13, 15.

blessed be He, for a period of ninety years dispatched [Prophets] with warnings to Israel. And the proof? The verse *Yet the Lord forewarned (wy'd) Israel, and Judah, by the hand of every prophet, and of every seer* (2 Kings 17:13), where counting the letters in the word *wy'd*, you will find that they add up to ninety: the *waw* equals six, the *yod* ten, the 'ayin seventy, the *daleṭ* four—altogether ninety. Thus you find that for a period of ninety years the Holy One, blessed be He, kept on forewarning Israel. And so, too, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: How many messengers did I send to you, to whom you would not hearken! As is written *And though I have sent you all My servants the Prophets, sending them daily betimes and often* (Jer. 7:25), saying to you *Turn ye from your evil ways!* (2 Kings 17:13). How many Prophets did the Holy One, blessed be He, send every day to Israel to forewarn them! It is said *And . . . I have sent you all My servants the Prophets, sending them daily;* the plural *Prophets* implies that He sent no fewer than two, one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

But a colleague of R. Jacob of Kefar Ḥanin taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, used to send every day a different prophet to go to them and forewarn them, and twice every day, morning and evening, Jeremiah used to go along with the prophet. And the proof that he went along? Jeremiah's saying *And I spoke unto you, speaking betimes and often, but ye heard not* (Jer. 7:13).

It was said by R. Phinehas the Priest ben R. Ḥama and by R. Hilkiyah in the name of R. Simon, quoting R. Jacob of Kefar Ḥanania: For a period of ninety years Hosea took it upon himself to be a forewarner of Israel, for thus it is written *The word of the Lord that came unto Hosea the son of Beeri, in the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah . . . At the beginning*³⁸ *the Lord spoke with Hosea, and the Lord said unto Hosea* (Hos. 1:1-2). The phrase *at the beginning* is taken as referring to the beginning of Uzziah's reign. Now you

38. JV: *When the Lord spoke at first with Hosea.* But the Midrashic comment requires the literal translation.

find that Uzziah reigned fifty-two years, and Jotham sixteen years, and Ahaz sixteen years³⁹—eighty-four years so far. And [six years later], in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign, the Ten Tribes were exiled,⁴⁰ as is said *Beerah's*⁴¹ son, whom Tiglath-pilneser king of Assyria carried away captive (1 Chron. 5:6). Hence for ninety years the Holy One, blessed be He, forewarned Israel by means of Hosea, but they did not repent, as is indicated by the verse *And though I have sent you all My servants the Prophets* (Jer. 7:25). It is because they did not repent that God said through Jeremiah: *How much more strongly could I have forewarned thee? What more parables could I have given thee, O daughter of Jerusalem?* (Lam. 2:13).

10. In another comment, the words are read *How many more ornaments* ("ydk) *might I have given thee?* (Lam. 2:13). With what ornaments did I not adorn you! Here the word "ydk is regarded as derived from 'dy, "ornament,"⁴² as in the verse *Therefore now put off thy ornaments from thee . . . And the children of Israel stripped themselves of their ornaments from Mount Horeb* (Exod. 33:5-6). For you find that after Israel went forth out of Egypt and came to the wilderness of Sinai and thereupon received the Torah, then—so taught R. Tanhuma Berabbi—the Holy One, blessed be He, adorned them with thirteen ornaments. And these are listed in the passage where God, speaking through Ezekiel, first tells of washing, cleansing, and anointing Israel: *Then washed I thee with water* (Ezek. 16:9), from the pollution of idolatry; *yea, I cleansed away thy blood from thee* (*ibid.*), the blood of circumcision and the blood of the Passover; *and I anointed thee with oil* (*ibid.*), with anointing oil. [The thirteen ornaments]: (1) *I arrayed thee also in richly woven work*, (2) *and furnished thee with tššym*,⁴³ (3) *and*

39. See 2 Kings 15:2, 15:33, and 16:2.

40. See 2 Kings 18:10.

41. Beerah is identified with Beeri, the father of Hosea.

42. By metathesis, "ydk, "forewarn thee," is read as though written "dyk, "ornament thee."

43. JV: "sealskin."

girded thee about with fine linen, (4) and covered thee with silk. I decked thee also with (5-6) ornaments, and I put (7-8) bracelets upon thy hands, (9) and a chain on thy neck. (10) And I put a jewel on thy forehead, (11-12) and roundels in thine ears, (13) and a beautiful crown upon thy head (Ezek. 16: 10-12). [With regard to a *crown upon thy head*], R. Johanan taught: When Israel stood before Mount Sinai and said, *All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do, and obey* (Exod. 24:7), sixty myriads of ministering angels came down forthwith with crowns in their hands and placed a crown upon each and every one in Israel. And R. Abba bar R. Kahana said in the name of R. Johanan: One hundred and twenty myriads of ministering angels came down with the Holy One, blessed be He, sixty myriads fastening crowns on Israel and sixty myriads girding them with corselets of armor. And R. Simeon ben Yoḥai said: They gave each person in Israel a sword with God's Ineffable Name graven upon it. R. Ḥanina bar Nathan of Sepphoris said: They gave each one of them a linen apron of magistracy; and R. Simeon said: They clothed each one of them with royal purple.⁴⁴

Another comment: The words *I arrayed thee also in richly woven work* refer to the making of the Tabernacle, of which it is written "And he made the veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen . . . the work of the weaver" (Exod. 36: 35-7).

And furnished thee with תְּשֻׁיִם (Ezek. 16:10). These words refer to the skins for the Tabernacle, as is written "And thou shalt make a covering for the tents of rams' skins dyed red, and a covering of תְּשֻׁיִם above" (Exod. 26:14). According to R. Judah, the word תְּשֻׁיִם means "violet-colored." According to R. Nehemiah, תְּשֻׁיִם refers to the skin of the *taḥaš*, an animal living in the wilderness whose flesh it is permitted to eat. Both R. Eleazar son of R. Jose, and R. Abbahu who cited R. Simeon ben Laḳish, said in the name of R. Meir: The *taḥaš* was created only to supply skins for the Tabernacle and then made to vanish.

Similarly with regard to things created for special purposes it

44. See Piskas 10.6, 21.7; and MTeh 103:8.

is written of the Temple *Send me also cedar trees, cypress trees, and alnum trees* (2 Chron. 2:7); and in another place it is said *And the king made of the alnum trees pillars . . . there came no such alnum trees, nor were seen, unto this day* (1 Kings 10:2). According to R. Abba, the *alnum* was ebony wood.⁴⁵ According to R. Huna the Priest ben Abun, the *alnumim* were locks of a very hard substance which, however, when exposed to the *Shamir*, became soft as any stuff that melts readily.⁴⁶ An alternative tradition: According to R. Abba, the *alnumim* were *blig*.⁴⁷ According to R. Hunya the Priest the son of Abin citing . . . Joseph, they were created for the special purpose of providing pillars for the Temple and then made to vanish.

And I girded thee about with fine linen (Ezek. 16:10). These words refer to the eight ministerial garments of the High Priest which were of linen, as is written "And the miter of fine linen, and the goodly headties of fine linen," etc. (Exod. 39:28).

And I covered thee with mšy (silk) (Ezek. 16:10). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: I made you into a thing of stinging substance (*mmš*) in the world: "I said, Ye are godlike stings" (Ps. 82:6). So R. Aibu explains the word *mšy*. But R. Judah son of R. Simon said: *Mšy* were the clouds of glory which surrounded Israel in the wilderness, as is written "The pillar of cloud by day . . . departed (*ymwš*) not from before the people" (Exod. 13:22).

I decked thee also with ornaments (Ezek. 16:11): the Holy One, blessed be He, adorned Israel with all kinds of ornaments.

And I put bracelets upon thy hands (ibid.)—by bracelets are meant the two Tables of the Covenant.

And a chain on thy neck (ibid.)—the chain is the Book of the Law, of which it is written "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Josh. 1:8).

45. Reading, with 'Aruk, not 'blygh but 'blyn'. See Ezek. 27:15.

46. Hence the change from *alnum* to *almug*, melting substance or wax (*mug*). The *Shamir*, a kind of worm, possesses the remarkable ability of cutting the hardest of diamonds. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1, 34.

47. The meaning is obscure; the text is probably corrupt.

And I put a jewel on thy forehead (Ezek. 16:12): "Thy forehead is like the tower of Lebanon" (Song 7:5).⁴⁸

And roundels in thine ears (Ezek. 16:12). *Roundels* refers to the words of the Sanhedrin, for our Masters taught: "The Sanhedrin sat in a semicircle the way people sit half way around a threshing floor" (Sanh 4:3), [and hence may be said to have spoken roundly to Israel—*roundels in thine ears*].⁴⁹

In another comment, the verse is rendered *And roundings*⁵⁰ *in thine ears*. R. Berechiah the Priest Berabbi said: The *roundings* are the Words of God. For as the Divine Word sought to come forth, the herald went before It and said to the realms, [that is, to the angels], of fire: Get out of the way of the Divine Word, lest It sear you as It goes forth. And at once the angels of fire got out of the way, and the celestial beasts got out of the way, lest they be seared by the blast of the Divine Word. The fire of the Divine Word is more fierce than the fire of the angels, for the angels come merely from the fire under the throne of glory, the fiery river which Daniel saw: *A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him* (Dan. 7:10), and of this fire they are created; but the fire of the Divine Word comes directly from the right hand of the Holy One, blessed be He. Thus it is written *From His right hand went a fire of law for them* (Deut. 33:2). You can now understand why the herald had to go before the Divine Word. And the Divine Word went forth out of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, and came and abided over the ears of the people of Israel, rounding itself over their ears. Hence *And roundings in thine ears*.

And a beautiful crown upon thy head (Ezek. 16:12). The crown is the Divine Presence: "And their king is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them" (Micah 2:13). "Behold all these ornaments," the Holy One, blessed be He, would say to Israel, "with how many more ornaments am I to adorn you?" *What other ornaments might I have given thee?*

48. This verse is commented upon in Song Rabbah, *ad loc.*, as follows: "This is the Sanctuary . . . Just as most ornaments are suspended from the forehead, so priesthood, Levites, and kingship are from Jacob."

49. See Piska 10.2.

50. Lip contractions used in uttering a round vowel.

11. In another comment, the words are rendered *How else might I have met thee*⁵¹ *and in what likenesses have appeared before thee?* (Lam. 2:13). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: How many meetings did I arrange with you! As in the cloud over the Tabernacle—a meeting referred to in the verse “And there I will meet with the children of Israel” (Exod. 29:43)—as at the Red Sea, as on Sinai, as in the wilderness, and as in the Tabernacle itself. *And in what likenesses have appeared before thee!* In how many different guises did I come to you! At the Red Sea I appeared to you as a mighty man waging war, as is written “The Lord is a man of war” (Exod. 15:3). Then at Sinai I appeared as an elder teaching Torah, <for the Torah is most comely> when it issues out of the mouths of elders. In the Tabernacle I appeared before you as a bridegroom entering his nuptial chamber. Hence *And in what likenesses have appeared before thee!*

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: Was it not I who appeared in many likenesses to the Prophets when they said to thee, “Return: repent and come back”? It is said *I have multiplied visions, and through the ministry of the Prophets have appeared in various likenesses* (Hos. 12:11). What did God mean by the statement *I have multiplied visions*? He meant, Did I not multiply for your sakes your seeing of many visions? Did not Isaiah see seraphim each with six wings, as is said *Above . . . stood the seraphim; each one had six wings* (Isa. 6:2)? And did not Ezekiel see them also, but see them with only four wings, as is said *Now it came to pass in the thirtieth year . . . and I saw visions of God . . . And out of the midst thereof came the likeness of four living creatures . . . And every one had four faces, and every one of them had four wings* (Ezek. 1:1-6)? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: You may ask, Why was it that Isaiah saw the seraphim each with six wings, while Ezekiel saw them each with four wings? And He Himself answered: After the Temple was destroyed, the two⁵² wings the

51. “*ydk*,” usually “take to witness,” will now be interpreted as though derived from *y’d*, “meet.”

52. “two”—Parma MS. See Pirke dē-Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 4, end; and B.Ḥaḡ 13b.

seraphim use for flying, [whose motion makes a sound of singing], vanished. For, said the Holy One, blessed be He, since the dais where the priests sang⁵³ on the earth below exists no more, the dais where the priests sing in the heaven above shall exist no more. [And the wings of the seraphim, the wings that make a sound of singing, shall vanish].

R. Jacob of Kefar Hanin asked: Are you spinning out all this about the grief in heaven on your own, without any support from Scripture? No. Consider God's revelation of His grief in such a statement as *Therefore are My loins filled with pain* (Isa. 21:3); [and the grief He further reveals in the question], Have I not described Myself as one who sits weeping, as is written *But if ye will not hear it, My soul shall weep in secret for your pride; and Mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears* (Jer. 13:17)? Moreover, have I not also sent word to you, that if you wish to repent for no other reason than your concern for Me, do so: *Give glory to the Lord your God before He grow dark* (Jer. 13:16)? The Holy One, blessed be He, went further in describing His grief: I was the strong Rock, but thou hast made Me weak as a woman in travail,⁵⁴ as is written *And hast depleted the strength of the Rock that gave thee birth*⁵⁵ (Deut. 32:18).

And what shall I liken to thee? (Lam. 2:13). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: What nation have I made as great as thou that I might comfort thee by likening its fall to thine? None. As R. Abbahu taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, is not content merely to stretch forth His hand and bring desolation to nations, for it is written *Surely He will not put forth His hand for desolation, unless alongside His calamity there be comforting for them*⁵⁶ (Job 30:24). The words *Surely . . . not . . .*

53. "the dais where the priests sang"—Parma MS and P.

54. The reference may be to the end of Isa. 21:3 cited previously: *Pangs have taken hold upon Me as the pangs of a woman in travail*.

55. IV: *of the Rock that begot thee thou wast unmindful*. But the word *tšy* may be regarded as a form of *nšh*, "unmindful," or as a form of *tšš*, "deplete, weaken." Cf. Piska 24.2.

56. IV: *Surely none shall put forth his hand to a ruinous heap, neither because of these things shall help come in one's calamity*. The Hebrew for "help" may also mean "comforting."

for desolation refer to the desolation of a nation. If He does bring calamity upon it, He also comforts it—comforts it by likening its calamity to the calamity of another, so that *alongside His calamity there be comforting for them*, [for each nation that has suffered calamity].

And would you like proof from Scripture that when nations fall, the Holy One, blessed be He, comforts them by likening each to another? You find that when the Egyptians and Pharaoh fell, they were comforted by comparison of their lot with Assyria's. Thus it is written *Son of man, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh king of Egypt* (Ezek. 30:21) . . . *Whom art thou like? . . . Behold, the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon* (Ezek. 31:2-3)—he was king of the whole world. *With fair branches* (*ibid.*)—he was of good lineage. *And with an overshadowing shroud* (*ibid.*)—the merit of his ancestors enfolded him. *And of a high stature* (*ibid.*)—he was lord of all the world. *And his top was out of the intertwined foliage* (*ibid.*)—[Assyria stood high above all the other nations]. For when all the nations of the world intertwined to build the Tower of Babel and provoke the Holy One, blessed be He, Assyria left their counsel and went hence, as is said "Out of that land went forth Asshur" (Gen. 10:11), that is, according to R. Simeon ben Lakish, Assyria spurned their counsel and went away.⁵⁷ *The waters made him great* (Ezek. 31:4), for his decree as king of Nineveh was: "Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste anything; let them not feed, not even drink water" (Jonah 3:7). So great was his contrition that he was even willing to forego the drinking of water—hence he was made great in the world, as is said *The waters made him great*. Through what prophet was Asshur thus exalted in the world? Through Jonah who came up out of the deep, for the same verse goes on to say of Asshur *the deep made him great* (*ibid.*): "And the account [of Jonah's coming up from the deep] had its effect upon the king of Nineveh" (Jonah 3:6).

And so Pharaoh and the Egyptians were comforted by being

57. See Rashi on Gen. 10:11.

likened to Assyria. And when Assyria fell, it was comforted by being likened to Egypt, as is written *Art thou better than No Amon?* (Nahum 3:8). *Art thou better than No*—better than Alexandria? Than *Amon*—than she who, with regard to fastidious behavior,⁵⁸ became the educator (*'wmnyt*) of the entire world? Or better than *Amon* who reared (*'wmnt*) God's children [when they lived in Egypt]?

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: When the nations of the world fall, I comfort them by likening them to one another. But you—with what nation have I made you equal so that I might comfort you by likening you to it? *What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee?* (Lam. 2:13). What other nation have I singled out by making for it the Ark, the cover for the Ark, cherubim, the altar, the table for showbread?⁵⁹

Another comment: *What shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee?* R. Abba said: Why were the Ten Tribes banished in one direction and the Tribe of Judah in another direction? In order that the latter should be comforted by being likened to the former, and that the former should be comforted by being likened to the latter. And the Holy One, blessed be He, said to them: *Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people* [—that is, comfort ye each other].

It was along such lines as these we have been following⁶⁰ that R. Tanhuma used to begin his discourse on the verse *Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people*.

12. *For thy breach is great like that of the sea; who can heal thee?* (Lam. 2:13). R. Hilfa of Rummyah taught: Had Scripture

58. At the suggestion of Professor Saul Lieberman, *hbrty* is construed as borrowed from the Greek *habrotēs*, "delicacy, luxuriousness."

59. Since you are uniquely endowed by God, there is no nation on earth by the recital of whose misfortunes I can comfort you. Accordingly it is I Myself, the Lord your God, who must comfort you. Cf. Piskas 29/30A.3; and 30.1.

60. "It was along such lines as these we have been following"—Parma MS. The expression *hd't hzw* is frequent in Palestinian texts. See *Sefer ham-ma'āsīm in Tarbiš*, 1 (1930), p. 98. I am indebted to Professor Mordecai Margulies for the reference.

said, "Thy breach is great like the wound of one dead," it would have intimated that there was to be no restoration for Israel. But Scripture says, *Thy breach is great like that of the sea*. As the sea awaits healing, so Israel awaits it. When the Temple is rebuilt, the waters will go forth from under the Temple, as is written *And it shall come to pass in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem: half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea* (Zech. 14:8). And these waters will first come into the Great Sea and sweeten it, as is said *For these waters come thither that I may heal it*⁶¹ (Ezek. 47:9). And then the Great Sea will go into [the Dead] Sea and heal it. Hence *Who can heal thee* implies that He who can heal the wound of the sea will heal thy wound, O Israel.

In another comment, the words are rendered *When shall I find Myself reconciled to thee, that I may comfort thee?* (Lam. 2:13). When I find Myself reconciled to thee, then I shall say *I will walk among you, and be your God, and ye shall be My people* (Lev. 26:12)—then I shall comfort you, I in My own glory will come and comfort you: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you*.

13. Another comment: *I, even I, am He that comforteth you* (Isa. 51:12). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Such is My skill that I heal with the very thing I smite with. A mortal wounds with a knife and heals with a poultice. But God's skill is not of this order. For the very thing He wounds with is the very thing He heals with, as is said *For I will restore health unto thee out of thy wounds—I will heal thee, saith the Lord* (Jer. 30:17). Heal wounds with wounds? Come, look in Scripture! Israel sinned at the brooks, as is said *Ye that inflame yourselves among the terebinths, under every leafy tree; that slay the children in the brooks under the clefts of the rocks* (Isa. 57:5); and they were smitten at a brook, as is said *And Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there* (1 Kings 18:40); yet they will be comforted at brooks, as is said

61. MT: *that all things be healed*.

And by the brook upon the bank thereof on this side and on that side, shall grow every tree for food (Ezek 47:12). They sinned at rivers, as is said *And now what hast thou to do in the way to Egypt . . . to drink the waters of the River?* (Jer. 2:18); and they were smitten at the rivers, as is said *By the rivers of Babylon* (Ps. 137:1); yet they will be comforted at rivers: *Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river* (Isa. 66:12). They sinned upon the mountains, as is said *They sacrifice upon the tops of the mountains* (Hos. 4:13); and they were smitten upon the mountains: *And before your feet stumble upon the mountains of twilight* (Jer. 13:16); yet they will be healed upon the mountains, as is said *How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger of good tidings* (Isa. 52:7), and *It shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down sweet wine* (Joel 4:18). They sinned in the Land: *Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own Land, they defiled it* (Ezek. 36:17); and they were smitten in the Land: *Your Land is desolate* (Isa. 1:7); yet they will be comforted in the Land: *And thy Land, Espoused* (Isa. 62:4). They sinned in the seed: *A seed of evil-doers* (Isa. 1:4); and they were smitten in the seed: *Thou shalt carry much seed out into the field, and shalt gather little in* (Deut. 28:38); yet they will be comforted in the seed: *The holy seed shall be the stock thereof* (Isa. 6:13). They sinned in worshipping the stock of a tree: *Who say to a stock: "Thou art my father"* (Jer. 2:27); and they were smitten under a tree: *And the children have stumbled under the wood [of a tree]* (Lam. 5:13); yet they will be comforted by the promise of long life like a tree's: *For as the days of a tree shall be the days of My people* (Isa. 65:22). They sinned like grapes that have gone bad: *Their grapes are grapes of gall* (Deut. 32:32); and they were smitten—plucked like grapes from the vine: *There are no grapes on the vine* (Jer. 8:13); yet they will be comforted with grapes: *And of the blood of the grapes thou wilt drink foaming wine* (Deut. 32:14). They sinned at a fig tree:⁶²

62. "a fig tree"—Parma MS and Margoloth gloss. The reference is to the

As the first-ripe in the fig tree (Hos. 9:10); and they were smitten—snatched like figs from the trees: *Nor figs on the fig tree* (Jer. 8:13); yet they will be comforted by bearing fruit like fig trees: *The fig tree putteth forth her green figs* (Song 2:13). They sinned like serpents: *Their venom is like the venom of a serpent* (Ps. 58:5); and they were smitten by serpents: *For behold, I will send serpents, basilisks, among you* (Jer. 8:17); yet they will be comforted by the sight of tame serpents: *And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp* (Isa. 11:8). They sinned like lions, as is written *Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions* (Zeph. 3:3); and they were smitten by lions: *A lion is gone up from his thicket* (Jer. 4:7); yet they will be comforted by the sight of peaceful lions: *And the lion shall eat straw like the ox* (Isa. 11:7). They sinned like wolves, as is written *Her priests*⁶³ *are wolves of the desert* (Zeph. 3:3); and they were smitten by wolves: *A wolf of the deserts doth spoil them* (Jer. 5:6); yet they will be comforted by the sight of tame wolves: *The wolf and the lamb shall feed together* (Isa. 65:25). They sinned in worshiping a calf in Horeb: [*They made a calf in Horeb* (Ps. 106:19)]; and they were smitten—broken like a calf to the yoke, *And Ephraim is a heifer well broken that loveth to thresh* (Hos. 10:11); yet they will be comforted and gambol like calves: *And ye shall go forth, and gambol as calves of the stall* (Mal. 3:20). They sinned like a bereft virgin who refuses to be reconciled: *Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the husband of her youth*⁶⁴ (Joel 1:8); and they were smitten—ravished like virgins: *They have ravished the women in Zion, the maidens in the cities of Judah* (Lam. 5:11); yet they will be comforted with the restoration of their virginal purity: *Return, return, O virgin of Israel, to these thy cities* (Jer. 31:21). They

fruit which Adam ate. See Piska 42.1; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1, 75. PE: "fig trees."

63. "priests"—Parma MS and P; MT: "judges."

64. The sin is not so much in giving in to grief and refusing consolation, as in not acknowledging the justice of the affliction brought upon her for her own or the bridegroom's transgression.

sinned like a bride who forgets the ornaments bestowed upon her: *Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?* (Jer. 2:32);⁶⁵ and they were smitten—lost their joy which was like a bride's, as is said: *Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah . . . the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride* (Jer. 7:34); yet they will be comforted as a bride: *And as the Bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride* (Isa. 62:5). They sinned through following the elders who worshiped idols, as is said: *Seventy . . . of the elders of Israel, and . . . Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan* (Ezek. 8:11);⁶⁶ and they were smitten—the elders failed them: *The elders . . . sit upon the ground, and keep silence* (Lam. 2:10); yet they will be comforted by the sight of contented elders: *There shall yet old men and old women sit in the broad places of Jerusalem* (Zech. 8:4). They sinned through following the priests, (as is said: *It is because of the sins of her prophets and the iniquities of her priests* (Lam. 4:13);> and they were smitten through seeing the priests perish: *My priests and mine elders perished in the city* (Lam. 1:19); yet they will be comforted through becoming priests, as is written: *But ye shall be named the priests of the Lord . . . the ministers of our God* (Isa. 61:6). They sinned by insisting on having kings, for it is written: *Make us a king to judge us like all the nations* (1 Sam. 8:5); they were smitten through losing kings, as is written: *I give thee a king in Mine anger and take him away in My wrath* (Hos. 13:11); yet they will be comforted through kings: *And their king is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them* (Micah 2:13).⁶⁷

They sinned with the head: *The heads thereof judge for reward* (Micah 3:11); and they were smitten in the head, as is said: *The whole head is sick* (Isa. 1:5); yet they will be com-

65. I follow Mah in substituting Jer. 2:32 for Isa. 49:15, which is cited in Parma MS and P.

66. See Piska 31.2.

67. The order thus far has been the earth—its brooks, rivers, and mountains, and itself; that which comes from the earth—seeds, trees, grapes, and figs; living creatures on it—serpents, lions, wolves, and the calf; human beings—virgins, brides, elders, priests, and kings.

forted at the head, for it is written: *And the Lord at the head of them* (Micah 2:13). They sinned with the forehead: *For all the house of Israel are stiff of forehead* (Ezek. 3:7); and they were smitten in the forehead: *The leprosy broke forth in his forehead* (2 Chron. 26:19); yet they will be comforted at the forehead: *A plate of pure gold . . . shall be upon Aaron's forehead* (Exod. 28:38). They sinned with the eye, as is written: *The daughters of Zion . . . walk . . . with wanton eyes* (Isa. 3:16) and they were smitten in the eyes, as is written: *For the Lord . . . hath closed your eyes* (Isa. 29:10); yet they will be comforted by the eye, as is written: *For they shall see, eye to eye, the Lord returning to Zion* (Isa. 52:8). They sinned with the ears, as is written: *They stopped their ears, that they might not hear* (Zech. 7:11); they were smitten in the ear, as is written: *Hear, ye deaf* (Isa. 42:18); yet they will be comforted by the ear, as is written: *The children of thy bereavement shall yet say in thine ears* (Isa. 49:20). They sinned by using the nose in obscene gestures, as is written: *And, lo, they put the branch to their nose* (Ezek. 8:17); and they were smitten with the Nose's angry snorting, as is written: *For all this the snort of His anger is not turned away*⁶⁸ (Isa. 5:25); yet they will be comforted by praise of the nose, as is written: *Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon*⁶⁹ (Song 7:5). They sinned with the lips, as is written: *Your lips have spoken lies* (Isa. 59:3); and they were smitten on the lips: *The Lord will cut off all flattering lips* (Ps. 12:4); yet they will be comforted with praise of the lips: *Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet* (Song 4:3). They sinned with the teeth, as is written *That bite with their teeth* (Micah 3:5); and were smitten in the teeth: *He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones* (Lam. 3:16); yet they will be comforted with praise of the teeth: *And his teeth are whiter than milk*⁷⁰ (Gen. 49:12). They sinned with their mouths: *They have set their mouth against the heavens* (Ps. 73:9); they were smitten by the mouth: *And they de-*

68. *For all this the snort of His anger is not turned away*—Parma MS.

69. Cf. above, Piska 33:10.

70. See PH, *ad loc.* JV: *His teeth are white with milk.*

your Israel with open mouth (Isa. 9:11); yet they will be comforted by the Mouth: *And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it* (Isa. 40:5). They sinned with the neck: *The daughters of Zion . . . walk with stretched-forth necks* (Isa. 3:16); and they were smitten on the throat: *Their throat is an open sepulchre* (Ps. 5:10); ⁷¹ yet they will be comforted by the throat: *Let the high praises of God be in their throat* (Ps. 149:6). They sinned in their hearts: *They made their heart as an adamant stone* (Zech. 7:12); and they were smitten at the heart: *For my sighs are many, and my heart is faint* (Lam. 1:22); yet they will be comforted in their hearts: *Speak ye to the heart of Jerusalem* (Isa. 40:2). They sinned with the hands: *Your hands are full of blood* (Isa. 1:15); and they were smitten with the Hands: *For she hath received of the Lord's hand double for all her sins* (Isa. 40:2); yet they will be comforted by Hands: *The Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people* (Isa. 11:11). They sinned with the belly: *Their belly prepareth deceit* (Job 15:35); and they were smitten in the belly: *My bowels, my bowels! I am pained* (Jer. 4:19); yet they will be comforted by the belly: *Thy belly is a heap of wheat* (Song 7:3). They sinned with the foot: *For their feet run to evil* (Prov. 1:16); and they were smitten on the foot: *From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it* (Isa. 1:6); yet they will be comforted by the foot: *Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that announceth peace* (Nahum 2:1). They sinned with the extremities of their garments: *Also in thy skirts is found the blood of the souls of the innocent poor* (Jer. 2:34); and they were smitten at the earth's extremities: *That it . . . take hold of the extremities of the earth, and the wicked . . . shaken out of it* (Job 38:13); yet they will be comforted from the earth's uttermost extremities: *From the uttermost part of the earth have we heard songs* (Isa. 24:16). They sinned against the one known as "He," for it is

71. The words "yet they will be comforted by the throat: *Cry with the throat, spare not* (Isa. 58:1)," which follow in P, are deleted, as in Parma MS.

written: *They have belied the Lord, and said: "It is not He"* (Jer. 5:12); and they were smitten by the one known as "He": *But they rebelled, and grieved His holy spirit; therefore He was turned to be their enemy* (Isa. 63:10); yet they will be comforted by the one known as "He": *I, even I, am He that comforteth you*. It was thus that R. Tanhuma expounded these verses. Amen, and Amen! Selah. And may it be God's will to comfort us!

SUMMARY

The Mourners for Zion and
the advent of the Messiah

The Mourners for Zion suffered great distress because many children of Israel both mocked and scorned them. But when these mockers see the afflictions decreed by God for the years immediately preceding the advent of the Messiah, they will understand that it was because of the unending prayers of the Mourners for Zion that the Messiah came. Thereupon the righteous men in Israel will say to God: We did not act rightly towards the Mourners for Zion—like sheep we went astray. And God will say: Your straying is forgiven you. In the meantime, the Mourners for Zion will walk with impunity even in the midst of angels of destruction, and the children of Israel will say: Without justification we made sport of the Mourners for Zion (Sec. 1).

God will say: O righteous men of the world, even though your obedience to words of Torah is pleasing to Me, yet you wait only upon My Torah—you do not wait for My kingship. Those who have waited for Me are the Mourners for Zion who grieved with Me because of My House which is destroyed. Since you know of all the attributes with which I have endowed the Messiah, could you not have yearned, as did the Mourners for Zion, for Me to send him to you? The children of Israel will reply: Master of the universe, Thou didst give us a heart of stone, and it led us astray. Thereupon God will say: I have already heard your prayer for forgiveness. Do you think you will be denied the reward for your obedience to Torah?

The Piska ends by describing certain traits of the Messiah and episodes in his life (Sec. 2).

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion,
shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; be-
hold, thy king cometh unto thee, he*

is submissive, and yet he promises salvation, afflicted, and he is riding upon an ass,¹ even upon a colt of the foal of an ass (Zech. 9:9).²

1. This verse is to be considered in the light of what Isaiah was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *And their seed shall be known among the nations, and their offspring among the peoples* (Isa. 61:9). What did Isaiah have in mind when he spoke this verse? He spoke it with a view to comforting the Mourners for Zion³ to whom the Holy One, blessed be He, will give victory over their enemies, as is said *And their seed shall be known among the nations*. Do not read "their seed" (zr'm) but "their arm" (zrw'm). And who will stand by them with his arm? The Holy One, blessed be He, will stand by them with His arm, in answer to the prayer *O Lord, be gracious unto us; we have waited for Thee; be Thou their arm every morning, our deliverance also in the time of distress* (Isa. 33:2). The phrase *every morning* alludes to those who rise up every morning to beseech mercy, alludes particularly to the Mourners for Zion who yearn for deliverance morning, evening, and noon. Now the Mourners for Zion suffered great distress because it was children of Israel who both mocked and scorned them. But when these children of Israel see the afflictions decreed by God for the years immediately preceding that extraordinary year in which the Messiah is to appear amidst Israel,⁴ and when they see that the afflictions follow

1. JV: *He is triumphant and victorious, lowly and riding upon an ass.*

2. At one time, according to Friedmann, Zech. 9 was read as the haftarah on the fifth of the seven Sabbaths of Consolation, specifically on the Sabbath *Ki tesse'* (Deut. 21:10-25:19). He suggests further that the reading of this haftarah was omitted because of the possibility of Christian umbrage.

3. According to Jacob Mann, this is the earliest reference to the Mourners for Zion, a phrase of Biblical origin (Isa. 61:3). See his *The Jews in Egypt* (London, 1920-22), I, 47-48. See also his essay in *hat-Tēkufah*, 23 (1927), 243 ff.

This group may have come into being shortly after the destruction of the Temple. Thus R. Joshua ben Hananiah rebuked those who in mourning for Zion refused to eat meat or drink wine. See B.BB 60b, and MTech 137:6. See also PRKM, p. 468.

4. See Piska 15.15.

one upon the other without ceasing, then at last they will understand that it was because of the unending prayers of the Mourners for Zion that the Messiah will appear. And the children of Israel will say: In our lifetime there were no such afflictions—is it possible, after all, that the Messiah is about to arrive?

And these are some of the afflictions by which the children of Israel who mocked the Mourners for Zion will come to understanding: During Nisan on the eve of the seven-year period preceding the arrival of the Messiah, a west wind will come forth, and snow will come down from heaven and smite all the seed in the furrows. And afterwards, month after month, evil things will begin to happen and will double in their degree of evil. Then the mockers will understand and say: Surely, here is augury of the king Messiah. Even then their conviction will not be certain until in the same seven-year period they will find themselves so punished that they will have faces as black as the bottom of a pot. And wherewith will they be punished? With famine. Once the stubborn will of Israel is broken—and it is broken only by means of famine—then the righteous men of the generation will stand up and [in mourning] remove their tefillin, lay them upon the ground, and say to Him: "Master of the universe, we have not acted rightly all these years—like sheep we have gone astray." The Holy One, blessed be He, will say: "Your straying is forgiven you." Then He will kiss them and put back the garland [of the tefillin] upon them. Thus he who has the merit of knowledge of Torah will find it standing by him; but he who has not the merit of knowledge of Torah, what can stand by him? Accordingly it may be concluded that he who believes implicitly in the Messiah from the very first year of the seven-year period will have his reward multiplied many times over.

All that see them shall acknowledge them (Isa. 61:9)—all will acknowledge the Mourners for Zion with whom the Holy One, blessed be He, will specially concern Himself. For during the time immediately preceding the appearance of the Messiah, the Holy One, blessed be He, will increase the number of the angels of destruction hovering over His world, and these will take

their toll of those children of Israel who scorned the possibility of redemption. In that time the Mourners for Zion will walk among and beside the angels of destruction like a man visiting with his fellow man, for the angels of destruction will do no harm to the Mourners for Zion. And the children of Israel, dumfounded, will say: ⁵ "Without justification we made sport of the Mourners for Zion. Without justification we mocked their words." They will go on to say, according to R. Jose the son of R. ⁶ Hanina: "And yet the merit of these Mourners nurtured in them the power to withstand the angels of destruction. What temerity we had to belittle them in our hearts!" This confession will come at the same time that, according to Isaiah, *The nations shall see thy triumph* (Isa. 62:2), these being the nations of the earth who will see the triumph of the Mourners for Zion. *And all kings, thy glory (ibid.)* ⁷—that is, all the children of Israel will be like kings for they will be possessed of God's wisdom. This possession will be thy glory, Israel, for all the nations to see.

All the foregoing commentary is derived from meditation upon the verse *And their arm shall be known among the nations*.

2. Another comment: *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion . . . Behold, thy king cometh*, etc. (Zech. 9:9). He who is called "king" is the one who is meant to rule over the generations that have been ⁸ and over the generations that are to be. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will have it proclaimed and said to all the righteous men of generation after generation: O righteous men of the world, even though your obedience to words of

5. "with whom the Holy One, blessed be He, will specially . . . dumfounded, will say"—Parma MS; PE: "for whose sake the Holy One, blessed be He, will make hover over His world angels of destruction which will go about destroying throughout the days of redemption. But the Mourners for Zion will walk among and beside the angels of destruction like a man visiting with his fellow man, and the angels of destruction will cause them no harm. And the children of Israel will say."

6. "Jose the son of R."—Parma MS.

7. The words "that is, kings, thy glory," which follow in P, are omitted, as in Parma MS and SPR.

8. And will be resurrected.

Torah is pleasing⁹ to Me, yet you wait only upon My Torah—you do not wait for My kingship. Hence I have declared on oath that for him who waits for My kingship I Myself shall bear witness in his behalf, as is said *Therefore*¹⁰ *wait ye for Me, saith the Lord, until the day that I rise up to witness*¹¹ (Zeph. 3:8). Those who have waited for Me are the Mourners for Zion who grieved with Me because of My House which is destroyed and because of My Temple¹² which is desolate. Now I bear witness for them, each of whom Scripture describes in the verse *With one that is of a contrite and humble spirit* (Isa. 57:15). Do not read *with one that is of a contrite . . . spirit*: read rather "*he that is of a contrite . . . spirit grieves with Me.*"¹³ Such are the Mourners for Zion who humbled their spirits, listened meekly to abuse of their persons, keeping silent the while, and yet did not consider themselves particularly virtuous therefor.

Another comment: *Until the day that I rise up to witness*. That is, on the day that I Myself will rise up to witness for the Messiah, whose merit is equal to that of the entire household of heaven, [and say]: Since you know of all the attributes with which I have endowed the Messiah,¹⁴ could you not have waited for Me to send him to you? The children of Israel will reply: Master of the universe, Thou didst give us a heart of stone, and it led us astray. If Azza and Azrael,¹⁵ whose bodies were fire, sinned when they came down to earth, would not we of flesh-and-blood sin all the more? God will answer: The Mourners

9. "pleasing"—Parma MS and probably P; PE: "needful."

10. The word *therefore* is construed by the commentator as intimating that God took an oath. Cf. the comment in Piska 31.9 on 1 Sam. 3:14.

11. By a slight change in vocalization the Hebrew for "prey" may be read as "witness."

12. The Temple is the symbol of God's kingship and sovereignty, of His clear and manifest justice in the society of men. Since the Temple was in Zion, those who mourn its destruction were referred to as "the Mourners for Zion." See Piskas 5.5, n. 48, and 5.7.

13. The addition of a *yod* to the particle 't makes this translation possible.

14. Zeph. 3:5 describes the work of the Messiah as follows: *The Lord who is righteous is in the midst of her, He will not do unrighteousness; every morning doth He bring His right to light.*

15. Fallen angels. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1, 124.

merit the Messiah because they avowed their need of him as coming before the gratifying of any other desires they had.

Then, at this answer, all the righteous men of the world will weep, saying to Him: Yes. The Mourners for Zion came to this avowal, but we failed to. Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: Do not weep, My holy ones, My glorious ones. I have already heard your prayer. Do you think you will be denied the reward for your obedience to Torah? It goes without saying that your reward will be ample, as is said *And therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted that He may have compassion upon you; for the Lord is a God of justice, happy are all they that wait for Him. For, O people that dwellest in Zion at Jerusalem, thou shalt weep no more; the Gracious One will be gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry, when He shall hear, He will answer thee* (Isa. 30:18-19). *The Gracious One*, the One who gives reward for obedience to Torah, *will be gracious unto thee*, and ye will enjoy the days of the Messiah; *when He shall hear, He will answer thee* in the world-to-come, [which lies beyond the days of the Messiah]. And all the good things that I intend to bestow upon you are on account of the Messiah who has been kept in confinement all these years.

R. Yannai said in the name of Rab: He who looks forward to deliverance as from a watchtower, him the Holy One, blessed be He, will cause to lie down in the Garden of Eden, as is said *In a good pasture . . . I will feed My flock, and I will cause them to lie down* (Ezek. 34:15).

Submissive, and yet He promises salvation (Zech. 9:9) describes the Messiah, for when they laughed at him while he sat in prison, he submitted for the sake of Israel to the judgment imposed on him, and is therefore properly called submissive. Why is he spoken of as *yet he promises salvation*? Because after submitting to the judgment for their sake, he said: All of you deserve extermination; nevertheless, you will be saved, every one of you, by the mercy of the Holy One, blessed be He.¹⁶

16. "All of you deserve extermination . . . by the mercy of the Holy One,

Afflicted, and he is riding upon an ass (ibid.) describes the Messiah. And why is he called *afflicted*? Because he was afflicted during all his years in prison while transgressors in Israel laughed at him.

Why does Scripture say *riding upon an ass*? The ass represents the wicked who have no merit of their own and can manage to get along only by resorting to the merit of their fathers. But through the merit of the Messiah, the Holy One, blessed be He, shields them <and guides them> in a straight way, and redeems them, as is said *They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them; I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am become a father to Israel, and Ephraim¹⁷ is My first-born* (Jer. 31:9).

What is implied by the seemingly unnecessary *he* in the words *and he is riding*? That what he is in the days of the Messiah, he will be in the world-to-come, and he will never be other than what he is.

And his enemies—those who dispute with him—*will I clothe with shame* (Ps. 132:18). *And upon himself shall his crown shine (ibid.)*—the *And* at the beginning of this clause indicating that his crown will shine upon himself, and also upon those who are at one with him.

blessed be He"—Parma MS; PE: "Are you not—every one of you—my children? Surely every one of you will be saved by the mercy of the Holy One, blessed be He."

17. Ephraim is the name of the Messiah. See Piskas 36.1,2, and 37.1,2.

SUMMARY

God's reward of Israel's
steadfastness

In his Song of Songs, Solomon, inspired by the holy spirit praised Israel for their steadfastness. In Proverbs, also, Solomon spoke in praise of Israel who even in exile would not leave God, but gave themselves wholly over to Him and brought others near to dwell under His wings, and who, even in the midst of their anguish, spoke of Him as He who is righteous. Both Egyptians and Babylonians were lacking in such steadfastness (Sec. 1).

Because of Israel's steadfastness, God and His household in the time-to-come will make themselves as a wall of fire in behalf of Jerusalem. And the righteous will walk in the fire like a man who walks in the sun on a cold day and whom the warmth delights. That such a thing is possible is proved from what happened to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah in the fiery furnace (Sec. 2).

In the time-to-come God will bring together all the proselytes who were converted in this world and in their presence will judge the nations. The nations will plead: If we had come to Thy door, Thou wouldst not have received us. And God will reply: Let the proselytes who were converted out of your number come forward and testify against you (Sec. 3).

The Piska concludes with the words of Elijah who will act as harbinger of the Messiah (Sec. 4).

*Sing and rejoice, O daughter
of Zion; for lo, I come, and I
will dwell in the midst of thee
(Zech. 2:14).¹*

1. According to Friedmann (n. 1), at one time Zech. 2 was read as the haftarah on the sixth of the seven Sabbaths of Consolation, on the Sabbath of *Ki tabo'* (Deut. 26:1-29:8).

1. These words are to be considered in the light of what Solomon was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *A people like a wall*²—*we will build upon her a turret of silver; or a people like a door—we will frame her with boards of cedar* (Song 8:9). What did Solomon mean by this verse? He meant to praise the congregation of Israel [for its steadfastness, even though] when the Second Temple was built the Presence did not come to dwell in it. The Holy One, blessed be He, had said: If Israel—all of them—come up to the Land, the Presence will dwell in it; but if they do not, they will have only the echo of the Divine Voice³ to depend upon.

[Scripture describes as follows the response of the children of Israel to the sight of the Second Temple]: *But many of the priests and Levites and heads of fathers' houses,*⁴ *the old men that had seen the First House standing on its foundations, wept with a loud voice, when this House was before their eyes; and many shouted aloud for joy* (Ezra 3:12.) Those who wept were saying: *Who is left among you that saw this House in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?* (Haggai 2:3).⁵ If half of them were weeping, why were the other half of them shouting for joy? The old men who had seen the glory of the House in which the very Presence had dwelt, and now saw the Second House in which the Presence was not dwelling, were the ones who wept; but their children who had not seen the glory of the First House and now saw the Second House being built, shouted for joy. Thus it is said *Many of the priests and Levites . . . the old men . . . wept . . . and many shouted aloud for joy* (Ezra 3:12).

R. Isaac said: Why did not the Presence dwell in the Second

2. JV: *If she be a wall*, etc. By a slight change in vowels, the Hebrew 'im, "if," may be read 'om, "people."

3. Literally "Daughter of a Voice." See B.Yoma 9b and Song Rabbah 8:9.

4. The words "R. Isaac said: Why did not the Presence dwell in the Second House which the exiled children of Israel built? Because Cyrus king of Persia was responsible for their building of it," which follow in P, are deleted, as in Parma MS.

5. The order of the verse follows Parma MS.

House which the exiled children of Israel built? [Not, as has been said, because all the exiles failed to return to the Land, but] because Cyrus king of Persia was responsible for their building of it. Since he was of the seed of Japheth, the Presence would not rest in the handiwork of Japheth's seed. But in the First House which the children of Israel—the children's children of Shem—had built, <there the Presence had dwelt.> As Scripture says, *God shall enlarge Japheth, but He shall dwell in the tents of Shem* (Gen. 9:27).

Elsewhere in Scripture, Solomon speaks again in praise of the congregation of Israel, saying, *A woman of valor who can find? For her price is far above rubies* (Prov. 31:10). This text, as further commentary will indicate, is to be construed <as referring to Israel>. At the time that Israel were exiled from their Land, the ministering angels said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, if Israel, when they dwelt in their own Land, cleaved to idols, how much more and more will they do so now that Thou exilest them among the nations of the world!

What did the Holy One, blessed be He, say to them in reply? *The heart of her Husband doth safely trust in her, and He hath no lack of gain* (Prov. 31:11).⁶ By these words He meant: I am certain in regard to My children that they will not leave Me and cleave to idols, and that they will always give themselves over wholly to Me. And they will not deem it enough to give themselves over wholly, but they will also bring others near to dwell under My wings. In contrast to Israel's steadfastness, consider Egypt's want of it: I brought only ten plagues upon the Egyptians and they could not withstand them, so that the Egyptians are extinct and gone, as is said *They are extinct, they are quenched as a wick* (Isa. 43:17). And consider also the kingdom of Babylon. Upon the Babylonians I brought troubles in very small measure, but they could not withstand them, and so the Babylonians came to naught and are gone from the world, as is said *Behold, the land of the Chaldeans—this people is no more; the Assyrian hath appointed it for the beasts of the*

6. The verse from Proverbs is added, as in Parma MS.

wilderness: they set up their towers, they stirred the palaces thereof; he made it a ruin (Isa. 23:13). As for Israel, even though I bring troubles and chastisements upon them in this world, they do not recoil from Me, but remain steadfast and therefore endure for ever and ever.

[In further praise of the congregation of Israel as a woman of valor, Solomon goes on to say]: *She doeth Him good and not evil all the days of her life* (Prov. 31:12). [With Israel's valor before Him], the Holy One, blessed be He, could say to the ministering angels: Come and I will make you know the valorous conduct of My children. Lo, I burdened them with ever so many troubles in this world, and I brought chastisements upon them in this world in each and every generation, yea, in each and every hour; yet they do not recoil rebelliously—rather they call themselves wicked, and even in the moment of their anguish at the hands of the unutterably wicked they speak of Me as "He who is righteous." Even in such a moment they speak as follows: "But in truth, we have sinned. We have committed crimes, we have done what is wrong, we have transgressed, we have revolted, we have rebelled. We have turned aside from Thy commandments and ordinances, and our sinning has done us no good. Thou art righteous in all that has come upon us; for it is Thou who hast acted truly, and it is we who have done wrong."⁷ Therefore Solomon extolled the congregation of Israel: *A woman of valor who can find?*

All the foregoing commentary is derived from meditation upon the verse *A people like a wall* (Song 8:9).

2. Another comment: *Sing and rejoice*. Come and see what Scripture says directly before these words: *And I, saith the Lord, will be unto her a wall of fire around about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her* (Zech. 2:9). Resh Lakish taught:⁸ What does the apparently unnecessary *and* in the words *And I* imply? That the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I and My entire

7. See APB, p. 258.

8. "Resh Lakish taught"—Parma MS.

household will make ourselves as a wall in her behalf—in behalf of Jerusalem in the time-to-come—and I shall enjoin angels to watch it in her behalf, as is said *I have set watchers upon thy walls, O Jerusalem* (Isa. 62:6). But if fire is made to encompass it, who will be able to enter within Jerusalem? Righteous men in the time-to-come, who will walk about in fire as a man who walks in the sun on a cold day, and whom the warmth delights. And if you marvel at this thing, come and consider Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, who, when Nebuchadnezzar put them in the fiery furnace, walked in it as on a cold day a man walks in the sun whose warmth is delightful to him, as is said *He answered and said: "Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of God's"* (Dan. 3:25). The text does not speak of "the first" but of *the fourth*. This was Gabriel who walked after them as a disciple walks behind⁹ a master: thus you are taught that the righteous are greater than the ministering angels.

Another comment: *And the appearance of the fourth*. When Nebuchadnezzar saw Gabriel, he recognized him and said: "This is the very one I saw in the war of Sennacherib, the one who consumed in fire the hosts of Assyria." According to the elder R. Eliezer, when Nebuchadnezzar saw Gabriel, all his limbs trembled and he said: "This is the very angel I saw in the war of Sennacherib, in which, taking the shape of a nozzle spouting flame, he consumed Sennacherib's entire camp in fire."¹⁰ Hence it is said *A wall of fire round about*.

But is not the dwelling place of the Holy one, blessed be He, only on high, as is said *His glory is above the heavens* (Ps. 113:4)? What then is intended by *And I will be the glory in the midst of her* (Zech. 2:9)? R. Joshua ben Levi said: It was intended to make known to all the inhabitants of the world the

9. "behind"—Parma MS; P: "in the presence of."

10. See B.Sanh 95b, and MTeh 79:1. According to this tradition, Nebuchadnezzar was one of the few who remained alive after the angel of the Lord went forth and smote the camp of the Assyrians (2 Kings 19:35).

excellence of Israel, for on account of Israel the Holy One, blessed be He, brings His presence down from the heavens on high and causes it to dwell on the earth. Hence it is said *And I will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and I will be the glory in the midst of her.*

3. Another comment: *Sing and rejoice . . . And many nations shall join themselves to the Lord* (Zech. 2:14-15). R. Ḥanina bar Papa said: Scripture is speaking here of the occasion in the time-to-come when the Holy One, blessed be He, will judge all the nations of the earth. On that occasion the Holy One, blessed be He, will bring together all the proselytes who were converted in this world and in their presence will judge the nations. He will say: Why did you leave Me in order to worship idols of no substance? The nations will reply: Master of the universe, if we had come to Thy door, Thou wouldst not have received us. He will reply: Let the proselytes who were converted out of your number come forward and testify against you. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, will fetch all the proselytes who were converted, and they will judge the nations, asking them: Why did you leave Him and worship idols of no substance? Jethro—was he not a priest of idols? Yet as soon as he came to the door of the Holy One, blessed be He, He received him. And we—were we not worshipers of idols? Yet as soon as we came to the door of the Holy One, blessed be He, He received us. At once all the wicked will be put to shame by the argument of the proselytes, as it is said *But on this ground alone they are consumed in the fire of judgment, the folly of their argument having been set forth; it is a doctrine of vanities, it is but a stock*¹¹ (Jer. 10:8). Hence it is said *Sing and rejoice*, etc.

4. Another comment: *Sing and rejoice*. When will this behest be fulfilled? When the Holy One, blessed be He, redeems Israel. Three days before the Messiah comes, Elijah will come and

11. JV: *But they are altogether brutish and foolish: the vanities by which they are instructed are but a stock.*

stand upon the mountains of Israel, and weep and lament upon them, but then will say: Behold, O Land of Israel, how short a time before you cease to be a waste land, dry and desolate! Elijah's voice will be heard from world's end to world's end. And then he will say to the children of Israel: Peace has come to the world, as is said *Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that announceth peace* (Nahum 2:1). When the wicked hear this, they will rejoice, every one of them, saying one to another, "Peace has come to us." On the second day Elijah will come and stand upon the mountains of Israel, and say: Good has come to the world, as is said *The messenger of good tidings* (Isa. 52:7). On the third day he will come and say, Salvation has come to the world, as is said *That announceth salvation* (*ibid.*). But when he understands the wicked to be saying that peace, good, and salvation are for them as well, he will add *Unto Zion, thy God reigneth* (*ibid.*)—that is, salvation is come to Zion and to her children, but not to the wicked. In that hour the Holy One, blessed be He, will show His glory and His kingship to all the inhabitants of the world: He will redeem Israel, and He will appear at the head of them, as is said *The breaker*¹² *is gone up before them; they have broken forth and passed on, by the gate, and are gone out thereat; and their king is passed on before them, and the Lord at the head of them* (Micah 2:13).

12. Kimḥi, quoting a Rabbinic source, identifies *the breaker* as Elijah.

SUMMARY

The light of the Messiah

On account of the Torah, Israel is destined in the time-to-come to enjoy God's light, the Messiah, but Satan and the nations' princely counterparts in heaven will be shaken at the sight of him.

At the time of his creation, the Messiah was told that the sins of souls as yet unborn would bend him down under a yoke of iron for seven years; but that if the prospect of such suffering saddened him, these souls would be made to perish. With joy the Messiah took this suffering upon himself so that no one in Israel would perish. God's love for Israel is such that when the heavenly counterparts of the princes of the kingdoms bring charges against the Messiah's generation, God will reject the charges outright (Sec. 1).

For seven years the Messiah, now referred to as Ephraim, will endure the suffering decreed for him even as God will endure the pain of Israel's banishment. At Israel's return from exile, God himself will go at the head of them.

In the year in which the king Messiah will reveal himself, all the kings of the nations of the earth will be at strife with one another. Fearful of this strife, Israel will be reassured by God: "Why are you afraid? The time of your redemption is come. You will never again be enslaved by the kingdoms." Then the Messiah will make a proclamation to Israel, saying: "Meek ones, the day of your redemption is come. If you do not believe me, behold my light which rises upon you." At that time the nations of the earth will be in darkness, and they will seek the light of the Messiah and of Israel: every one in Israel will have 2,800 disciples from the nations of the earth (Sec. 2).

*Arise, shine, for thy light is come,
and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

*For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth,
and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee
the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be
seen upon thee (Isa. 60:1-2).¹*

1. These words are to be considered in the light of what David king of Israel was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *For with thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light do we see light* (Ps. 36:10). What did David have in mind when he uttered this verse? He had in mind the congregation of Israel who said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, on account of the Torah Thou hast given me, the Torah which is called "fountain of life," I am destined to enjoy Thy light in the time-to-come.

What is meant by *in Thy light do we see light*? What light is it that the congregation of Israel looks for as from a watchtower? It is the light of the Messiah, of which it is said *And God saw the light that it was good* (Gen. 1:4). This verse proves that the Holy One, blessed be He, contemplated the Messiah and his works before the world was created,² and then under His throne of glory put away His Messiah until the time of the generation in which he will appear.

Satan asked the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, for whom is the light which is put away under Thy throne of glory?

God replied: For him who will turn thee back and put thee to utter shame.

Satan said: Master of the universe, show him to me.

God replied: Come and see him. And when he saw him, Satan was shaken, and he fell upon his face and said: Surely, this is the Messiah who will cause me and all the counterparts in heaven of the princes of the earth's nations to be swallowed up in

1. According to Friedmann (n.1), Isa. 60:1-22 was read as the haftarah on the seventh of the seven Sabbaths of Consolation, specifically on the Sabbath *Nissahim* (Deut. 29:9-30:20).

2. Cf. Piska 33.6.

Gehenna, as is said *He will swallow up death for ever; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces* (Isa. 25:8).³ In that hour all princely counterparts of⁴ the nations, in agitation, will say to Him: Master of the universe, who is this through whose power we are to be swallowed up? What is his name? What kind of a being is he?

The Holy One, blessed be He, will reply: He is the Messiah, and his name is Ephraim,⁵ My true Messiah, who will pull himself up straight and will pull up straight his generation, and who will give light to the eyes of Israel and deliver his people; and no nation or people will be able to withstand him, as is said *The enemy shall not do him violence, nor the son of wickedness afflict him* (Ps. 89:23). And all his enemies and adversaries shall be beaten before him,⁶ as is said *I will beat to pieces his adversaries before him* (Ps. 89:24). And even seas and rivers will [yield to his power and] stop flowing,⁷ as is said *I will set his hand also on the sea, and his right hand on the rivers* (Ps. 89:26).

[At the time of the Messiah's creation], the Holy One, blessed be He, will tell him in detail what will befall him: There are

3. See Piska 37.1.

4. "all princely counterparts of"—Parma MS.

5. In no other work is the Messiah designated as Ephraim. Consequently N. Krochmal believed that an individual named Ephraim made himself out as the Messiah and was seized by the authorities (see his *Moreh nēḥūḳe haz-zēman*, ed. Rawidowicz, chap. 14, p. 255).

Nowhere else apparently is the Messiah represented as bearing the sins of the people of Israel. Accordingly Azariah dei Rossi, following Abraham Farissol, held that this passage was added under Christian influence (see his *Mē'or 'enayim*, ed. Cassel [Wilno, 1866], chap. 19, p. 250). In more recent years Eppenstein, in *MGWJ*, 55 (1911), 626–28, and Bamberger, in *HUCA*, 15 (1940), 429, followed this view. According to Bamberger (loc. cit., p. 431), Ephraim is the idealized representative of the "Mourners for Zion."

I am inclined to believe that the idea of the suffering Messiah may be native Jewish tradition (see Piska 37, n. 2). References to his sufferings are found in Piska 31.10; and possibly in MTeh 2:9. See Isaac Hirsch Weiss, *Dor dor we-doršaw*, (New York-Berlin, 5684/1924), 3, 287.

6. "shall be beaten before him"—Parma MS; PE: "scatter to flight."

7. "And even seas and rivers will [yield to his power and] stop flowing"—Parma MS; to make it possible for the scattered children of Israel to go to the Land of Israel without let or hindrance. FT: "And even rivers will stop flowing into the sea."

souls that have been put away with thee under My throne, and it is their sins which will bend thee down under a yoke of iron and make thee like a calf whose eyes grow dim with suffering, and will choke thy spirit as with a yoke; because of the sins of these souls thy tongue will cleave to the roof of thy mouth. Art thou willing to endure such things?

The Messiah will ask the Holy One, blessed be He: Will my suffering last many years?

The Holy One, blessed be He, will reply: Upon thy life and the life of My head, it is a period of seven years which I have decreed for thee. But if thy soul is sad at the prospect of thy suffering, I shall at this moment banish these sinful souls.

The Messiah will say: Master of the universe, with joy in my soul and gladness in my heart I take this suffering upon myself, provided that not one person in Israel perish; that not only those who are alive be saved in my days, but that also those who are dead, who died from the days of Adam up to the time of redemption;⁸ and that not only these be saved in my days, but also those who died as abortions; and that not only these be saved in my days, but all those whom Thou thoughtest to create but were not created. Such are the things I desire, and for these I am ready to take upon myself [whatever Thou decreest].

At these words, the Holy One, blessed be He, will appoint for the Messiah the four creatures who will carry the Messiah's throne of glory.⁹

Thereupon his enemies and the heavenly counterparts of the princes of the kingdoms will say: Come and let us bring charges against the Messiah's generation so that they may never be given existence in the world.

The Holy One, blessed be He, will reply to them: How dare you bring charges against that generation which will be greatly esteemed for its noble conduct, a generation in which I shall re-

8. "but that also those who are dead . . . up to the time of redemption"—Parma MS.

9. The Messiah is thus given an earthly counterpart of God's chariot. See *Ezek.* 1.

joice, and in which I shall take delight, which I shall uphold because of My pleasure in it, as is said *Behold My servant, whom I uphold, Mine elect in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My spirit upon him*, etc. (Isa. 42:1)? How then dare you bring charges against it? I would as soon cause every one of you to perish, consumed in flame by the firebrands with which you would be girded,¹⁰ but not one breathing creature of the Messiah's generation will I cause to perish.

The foregoing commentary is derived from meditation upon the verse *For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light do we see light*.

2. During the seven-year period preceding the coming of the son of David, iron beams will be brought and loaded upon his neck until the Messiah's body is bent low. Then he will cry and weep, and his voice will rise up to the very height of heaven, and he will say to God: Master of the universe, how much can my strength endure? How much can my spirit endure? How much my breath before it ceases? How much can my limbs suffer? Am I not flesh-and-blood?

It was because of the ordeal of the son of David that David wept, saying *My strength is dried up like a potsherd* (Ps. 22:16). During the ordeal of the son of David, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to him: Ephraim, My true Messiah, long ago, ever since the six days of creation, thou didst take this ordeal upon thyself. At this moment, thy pain is like My pain. Ever since the day that the wicked Nebuchadnezzar came up and destroyed My House and burned My Temple and banished My children among the nations of the world—and this I swear by thy life and the life of My own head—I have not been able to bring Myself to sit upon My throne. And if thou dost not believe Me, see the night dew that has fallen upon My head, as is said *My head is filled with dew, My locks with the drops of the night* (Song 5:2).

10. See Isa. 50:11.

At these words, the Messiah will reply: Now I am reconciled. The servant is content to be like his Master.

Then, so taught R. Levi, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the congregation of Israel: *Arise, shine, for thy light is come*; and Israel will reply: Master of the universe, go¹¹ Thou at the head of us. Forthwith the Holy One, blessed be He, will turn in heeding and¹² say to her: My daughter, thou hast made a right request of Me. Scripture reports what passed between God and the congregation of Israel as follows: *My Beloved spoke and said unto me: "Rise up, My love, My fair one, and come away" . . . [and I replied]: my Beloved is to be with me, and I am to be with Him* (Song 2:10, 16).

Another comment: With what may the congregation of Israel in this world be compared? With a cripple who is unable to come or go, so that the nations of the earth revile every Israelite, saying to each one of them every day: Thy God, where is He? Why does He not save thee, seeing thou art subjected to our power, and that we have the means to slay thee, to destroy thee?¹³ The congregation of Israel replies: A day is appointed for me when my king will reveal himself for my sake. He will strengthen me and stand me up on my feet, as is said *For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord* (Ps. 12:6).

R. Isaac taught: In the year in which the king Messiah reveals himself, all the kings of the nations of the earth will be at strife with one another. The king of Persia will make war against a king of Arabia, and this king of Arabia will go to Edom to take counsel from the Edomites. Thereupon the king of Persia will again lay the whole world waste.¹⁴ All the nations of the world will be agitated and frightened, they will fall upon their

11. "go"—Parma MS; FT: "stand."

12. "turn in heeding and"—Parma MS.

13. "seeing thou art . . . to destroy thee"—Parma MS.

14. On the basis of this passage Bernard J. Bamberger argues that Piskas 34-37 were "composed during the period of about five years when Persia and Arabia were both world powers," between the years 632 and 637. See *HUCA*, 15 (1940), 425-31.

faces, and they will be seized with pangs like the pangs of a woman in labor. And Israel, agitated and frightened, will say: Where shall we go, where shall we come? God will reply: My children, be not afraid. <All that I have done, I have done only for your sake. Why are you afraid? Do not fear.> The time of your redemption is come. And this latter redemption will not be like your previous redemption, for following your previous redemption, you suffered anguish and enslavement by the kingdoms; as for this redemption—following this one, you will have no anguish or enslavement by the kingdoms.

Our Masters taught: When the king Messiah appears, he will come stand on the roof of the Temple and will make a proclamation to Israel, saying: Meek ones, the day of your redemption is come. And if you do not believe me, behold my light which rises upon you, as is said *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee*. And it has risen only upon you and not upon the nations of the earth, as is said *For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples; but upon thee the Lord will arise, and His glory shall be seen upon thee*.

Then the Holy One, blessed be He, will brighten the light of the king Messiah and of Israel, whilst all the nations of the earth will be in darkness—in gross darkness—and they shall walk, all of them, by the light of the Messiah and of Israel, as is said *And nations shall walk at thy light, and kings at the brightness of thy rising* (Isa. 60:3). And they shall come and lick the dust touched by the feet of the king Messiah, as is said [*The inhabitants of*] *the isles shall entreat him and lick the dust of his feet*.¹⁵ And all of them shall come and fall upon their faces before the Messiah and before Israel, and say: Let us be slaves unto thee and unto Israel. And each and every one in Israel will have two thousand and eight hundred slaves, as is said *In that day it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold, out of all the*

15. "[*The inhabitants . . . his feet*]"—Parma MS and P. The verse in MT which comes closest to this quotation is *and lick the dust of thy feet* (Isa. 49:23).

languages of the nations, shall even take hold [of each tassel] of the skirt¹⁸ of him that is a Jew, saying: "We will go with you, for we have heard that God is with you" (Zech. 8:23).

16. Ten men out of each of the 70 nations makes 700; and since a garment has four corners, the 700, quadrupled, become 2800. See Rashi on B. Shab 32b. The proof-verse cited shows that the commentator's term "slaves" is to be understood in the sense of "disciples, followers in true belief."

Cf. Matthew 9:20, 14:36; Mark 5:28, 6:56; Luke 8:44. In these passages the Greek *kraspedon* may be taken to mean "tassel."

SUMMARY

The ordeal and triumph of
the Messiah

In the month of Nisan, in the year when the Messiah appears, the Patriarchs will ask him whether he is displeased with Israel because of the affliction he endured on their account. The Messiah will reply that all he did was for the sake of the Patriarchs and the children of Israel, that they might benefit from God's abundant goodness.

Then God will cloak the Messiah in something of the splendor of His own glory as protection against the nations of the earth, and will tell him not to fear them. As a sign of His love, He will make for him seven canopies of precious stones and pearls and have the north and south winds sprinkle all kinds of spices from the Garden of Eden before him (Sec. 1).

There follows an account of the seven garments that God will have worn in succession since creation, and the garment He will put upon the Messiah (Sec. 2), as all the kingdoms watch in fascination Israel's coming up out of exile in Babylon (Sec. 3).

*Rejoicing I will rejoice in the
Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God;
for He hath clothed me with garments of
salvation, He hath covered me with the
robe of victory, as a bridegroom putteth
on a priestly diadem, and as a bride
adorneth herself with her jewels (Isa. 61:10).¹*

1. When New Year's Day fell on a Monday and a Tuesday—so Friedmann (n. 1) suggests—Isa. 61:10–63:9 used to be read as the haftarah on the Sabbath of *Way-yelek* (Deut. 32:1–30).

1. This verse is to be considered in the light of what Jeremiah was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and will make them rejoice from their sorrow* (Jer. 31:13). What did Jeremiah have in mind in this verse? He had in mind the days of the Messiah when the Holy One, blessed be He, will bestow boons in great abundance upon Israel, as is said *O how abundant is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that take their refuge in Thee in the sight of the sons of men!* (Ps. 31:20). It is taught, moreover, that in the month of Nisan the Patriarchs will arise and say to the Messiah: Ephraim, our true Messiah, even though we are thy forbears, thou art greater than we because thou didst suffer for the iniquities of our children, and terrible ordeals befell thee, such ordeals as did not befall earlier generations or later ones; for the sake of Israel thou didst become a laughingstock and a derision among the nations of the earth; and didst sit in darkness, in thick darkness, and thine eyes saw no light, and thy skin cleaved to thy bones, and thy body was as dry as a piece of wood; and thine eyes grew dim from fasting, and thy strength was dried up like a potsherd—all these afflictions on account of the iniquities of our children,² all these because of thy desire to have our children benefit by that goodness which

2. The question of the Messiah's sufferings may be explained in Jewish terms as follows: The Messiah was created 2000 years before the world, he being one of seven special creations. These were: Torah; the throne of glory (or Providence); the Garden of Eden and Gehenna (or reward and punishment); repentance (or man's mending of himself); the Sanctuary (or God's provision for purging men of their sins); and the Messiah, whose name is graven as a jewel on the altar of the Sanctuary (see MTeh 90:12 and B.Pes 54a). Now when Israel's sins exceeded all bounds, God first vented His wrath on the sticks and stones of the Temple (see Piska 2.6; MTeh 62:4 and 79:3; Tanhuma, *Tazri'a*, end of 9 [ed. Buber, 13]; Lam. Rabbah B 4:11, p. 148). It may be that after the Temple's destruction the Messiah, by the same token, became a divine whipping boy upon whom God's wrath was vented. For in the absence of Israel's repentance, punishment for sin, for violation of the Torah, had to be imposed upon something or someone, in accordance with God's design which preceded by 2000 years the creation of the world. See also MTeh, p. xxiv.

the Holy One, blessed be He, will bestow in abundance upon Israel. Yet it may be because of the anguish which thou didst greatly suffer on their account—for thine enemies put thee in prison—that thou art displeased with them!

He will reply: O Patriarchs, all that I have done, I have done only for your sake and for the sake of your children, for your glory and for the glory of your children, that they benefit from that goodness which the Holy One, blessed be He, will bestow in abundance upon them—upon Israel.

The Patriarchs will say to him: Ephraim, our true Messiah, be content with what thou hast done, for thou hast made content the mind of thy Maker and our minds also.

Then—so taught R. Simeon ben Pazzi—the Holy One, blessed be He, will lift the Messiah up to the heaven of heavens, and will cloak him in something of the splendor of His own glory as protection against the nations of the earth, particularly against the wicked Persians. He will be told: Ephraim, our true Messiah, be thou judge of these and do with them what thy soul desires, for the nations would long since have destroyed thee in an instant had not God's mercies been exceedingly mighty in thy behalf, as is said *Ephraim is a darling son unto Me*³—*is he not as a child that is dandled? For as often as I speak of him I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My heart yearneth for him, in mercy I will have mercy upon him, saith the Lord* (Jer. 31:20). Why does the verse speak twice of mercy: *In mercy I will have mercy upon him*? One mercy refers to the time when he will be shut up in prison, a time when the nations of the earth will gnash their teeth at him every day, wink their eyes at one another in derision of him, nod their heads at him in contempt, open wide their lips to guffaw, as is said *All they that see me laugh me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head* (Ps. 22:8); *My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my throat; and thou layest me in the dust of death* (Ps. 22:16).

3. Wherever the term *unto Me* occurs, it is taken to mean that what is so designated is to endure for ever—in this instance Ephraim, the true Messiah. See Yalkuṭ Jer. 315; Sif Num. 92; and Yalkuṭ Sam. 124.

Moreover, they will roar over him like lions, as is said *They open wide their mouth against me, as a ravening and roaring lion. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is become like wax; it is melted in mine inmost parts* (Ps. 22:14-15). They will growl over him like lions who lust to swallow him, as is said *All our enemies have opened their mouth wide against us. Terror and the pit are come upon us, desolation and destruction* (Lam. 3:46-47).

The other mercy refers to the time when he will come forth out of prison, a time when not one kingdom nor two kingdoms nor three kingdoms will beset him, but one hundred and forty kingdoms will encompass him. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will say to him: Ephraim, My true Messiah, do not be afraid of them, for all these will die by the breath of thy lips, as is said *And with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked* (Isa. 11:4). Thereupon, what will the Holy One, blessed be He, make for the Messiah? He will make seven canopies of precious stones and pearls for him.⁴ As for each canopy, out of it there will flow forth four rivers—one of wine, one of honey, one of milk, and one of pure balsam. And the Holy One, blessed be He, will embrace the Messiah in the sight of the righteous and bring him within the canopy where all the righteous ones,⁵ the pious ones, the holy ones, the mighty men of Torah of every generation, will gaze upon him.

The Holy One, blessed be He, will then say to the righteous: O righteous of the world, Ephraim, My true Messiah, has not yet been repaid for half his anguish. I have one more measure of reward which I will give him, one which no eye in the world has seen, as is said *Neither hath the eye seen a God beside Thee, who worketh for him that waiteth for Him* (Isa. 64:3). Then the Holy One, blessed be He, will summon the north wind and the south wind—summon them both and say to them: Come, sweep and sprinkle all kinds of spices from the Garden of Eden

4. "He will make . . . for him"—Parma MS.

5. The words "and they are brought into the canopy, and they see him," which follow in P, are deleted, as in Parma MS.

before Ephraim, My true Messiah, as is said *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon My garden that the spices thereof may flow out. Let My beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruits* (Song 4:16).

The foregoing commentary is derived from meditation upon the verse *Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance . . . and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness* (Jer. 31:13, 14).

2. Another comment: *Rejoicing I will rejoice* (Isa. 61:10). The word *rejoicing* refers to the days of the Messiah; *I will rejoice* refers to the downfall of wicked Rome; *my soul shall be joyful in my God* refers to victory in the war against Gog and Magog.

Another comment: The word *rejoicing* refers to Israel's being delivered from punishment in Gehenna; *I will rejoice* refers to the time when the Inclination to evil will have been rooted out of Israel; *my soul shall be joyful in my God* refers to the time when our iniquities will be forgiven.

Another comment: *Rejoicing I will rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God*. The word *rejoicing* refers to the time when the angel of death will have been destroyed out of Israel's midst; *I will rejoice* refers to the days of the Messiah; *my soul shall be joyful in my God* refers to the time-to-come which will have no end.

For He hath clothed me with garments of salvation (*ibid.*), with the seven garments which, according to Scripture, the Holy One, blessed be He, will have put on successively from the day the world was created until the day He requites wicked Edom. When He created the world, He put on glory and majesty, as is said *Thou art clothed with glory and majesty* (Ps. 104:1). When He appeared to us on the Red Sea, He put on haughtiness, as is said *The Lord reigneth; He is clothed in haughtiness* (Ps. 93:1). When He gave the Torah to His people, He put on strength, as is said *The Lord puts on strength for the sake of His people* (Ps. 29:11). When He requited the Chaldeans, He put on vengeance, as is said *And He put on garments of vengeance for clothing* (Isa. 59:17). When He will have forgiven

the iniquities of Israel, He will put on a white garment, as is said *His raiment was as white snow* (Dan. 7:9). And when the Messiah appears, He will be clothed in righteousness, as is said *And He put on righteousness as a coat of mail* (Isa. 59:17). Finally, when He comes to requite Edom,⁶ He will put on red apparel, as is said *Wherefore is Thine apparel red?* (Isa. 63:2)—that is, red with vengeance against Edom. At that time the ministering angels will say to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, the comely apparel which Thou wearest now becomes Thee more than all the apparel Thou didst previously put on, as is said *As a bridegroom putteth on a priestly diadem* (Isa. 61:10).

Another comment:⁷ *As a bridegroom putteth on a priestly diadem* (Isa. 61:10). This text teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, will put upon Ephraim, our true Messiah, a garment whose splendor will stream forth from world's end to world's end; and Israel will make use of his light and say: Blessed is the hour in which he was created! Blessed is the womb whence he came! Blessed is the generation whose eyes behold him! Blessed is the eye which yearned and waited for him whose lips open with blessing and peace, whose speech is pure delight, whose heart meditates in trust and tranquility. Blessed is the eye which merits seeing him, the utterance of whose tongue is pardon and forgiveness for Israel, whose prayer is a sweet savor, whose supplication is purity and holiness. Blessed are the forbears of the man who merited the goodness of the world, the Messiah, hidden for the eternity[-to-come].

3. *And as a bride adorneth herself with jewels* (Isa. 61:10). Why is the congregation of Israel likened to a bride? To tell you that as a bride can be singled out only by her jewels, even so the adversaries of the congregation of Israel can be put to shame only by her merit.

Another comment: *And as a bride adorneth herself with*

6. "when He comes to requite Edom"—Parma MS.

7. "*As a bridegroom . . .* Another comment"—Parma MS.

jewels. As a bride is laden with fascination to all who look upon her, even so the congregation of Israel, coming up out of exile in Babylon at the end a Sabbatical year,⁸ was laden with fascination to all the kingdoms. And if you wish to go on with the comparison you might ask: Since a bride, once the days of her rejoicing are done, must go back to her labor, is the congregation of Israel, after their redemption, to endure another enslavement? No, Scripture says: *And the ransomed of the Lord shall . . . come with singing unto Zion . . . and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads* (Isa. 35:10, 51:11).

8. The Temple was destroyed at the end of a Sabbatical year (see B.Ar 11b and MTeh 94:6). Now since exile in Babylon lasted 70 years, redemption came ten seven-year cycles later, at the end of another Sabbatical year.

SUMMARY

The reward of humility

The Day of Atonement does not bring atonement to a man for transgressions between man and his fellow man, unless he first makes peace with him. If his fellow man refuses his offer of peace, he should again ask his pardon, but this time in the presence of ten other men.

When God sees a man humbling himself, He forgives his sins. The example of Job and his friends shows that as long as a man conducts himself with arrogance, no remission will be granted him. On the other hand, the example of Abraham, who prayed for the healing of Abimelech and his wife, shows that a man's compassion for his fellows will be followed by God's compassion for him, for Abraham's prayer was followed by Sarah's bearing a son.

*Midrash Harninu*¹

Let our master teach us: If there has been a quarrel between a man and his fellow, how may he obtain forgiveness on the Day of Atonement? Our Masters, using the style and method of the Mishnah, taught as follows: "The Day of Atonement atones for transgression of those things that are between man and God. As for transgression of things between man and his fellow man, the Day of Atonement does not bring atonement to

1. At the time of the additional sacrifice in the Temple on New Year's Day, the Levites sang Ps. 81, beginning with *Sing aloud unto God our strength* (see B.RH 30b). Since *Harninu*, usually rendered "Sing aloud," is in the causative form, the entire clause may be taken as saying "Bring men to sing to God—so to bring them is our strength." The caption "*Midrash Harninu*" is meant to subsume Piskas 38–52, namely, all the Piskas for New Year's Day, the Day of Atonement, Tabernacles, and the Eighth Day Festival, which follow.

a man unless he makes peace with his fellow man" (Yoma 8:9).²

But if he goes to make peace with him, and his fellow man refuses to accept his offer of peace, what is he to do? R. Samuel bar Naḥman said: Let him fetch ten men, have them draw up in a line, and in their presence say: "Between me and So-and-so there was a quarrel. I have sought to make peace with him, but he will not listen. Since he remains obdurate, I [in your presence] ask his pardon." And the source of this procedure? Scripture, which says: *Let him draw up a line*³ *of men and say: I have sinned, and perverted that which was right*, etc. (Job 33:27).⁴ When the Holy One, blessed be He, sees that a man humbles himself, He forgives his sins. As long as a man holds on to his arrogance, no remission will be granted him. And if it is your wish to have proof of this statement, then consider the following: As long as Job stood obdurate against his friends and his friends against him, the measure of God's justice was ready to be discharged against them both, for we find Job saying to them: *They that are younger than I have me in derision* (Job 30:1), and find them replying: *With us are both the gray-headed and the very aged men* (Job 15:10). But as soon as Job made peace with them and besought mercy for them, in that very instant the Holy One, blessed be He, returned to him, as is said *And the Lord returned at the return of Job*⁵ (Job 42:10). When? *When he prayed for his friends* (*ibid.*). Scripture says further, *When thou art endued with mercy, He has mercy upon thee*⁶ (Deut. 13:18). R. Jose, son of a woman of Damascus, said: You may regard your compassion as a sign that God's compassion will follow—whenever you show compassion for your fellow man, the Lord will show compassion for other mortals as

2. This passage, found in current editions of the Mishnah, may have been a Baraita. See Epstein, *Maḥo'*, p. 1306.

3. The commentator takes the stem *šr*, rendered in JV "come," as a denominative of *šwrh*, "line."

4. So P.Yoma 8:9, 45c. In B.Yoma 87b three lines, each one made up of three men, are said to be required.

5. JV: *And the Lord changed the fortunes of Job.*

6. JV: *And show thee mercy and have compassion upon thee.* See Sif Deut. 96.

well as ⁷ for you. Abraham is an example: because he procured ⁸ mercy for Abimelech, having prayed for him, Abraham received his reward at once. Scripture tells us *And Abraham prayed unto God; and God healed Abimelech and his wife* (Gen. 20:17). And what reward did Abraham receive? Abraham's wife was remembered and she bore him a son, as the verse immediately following tells us: *And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken* (Gen. 21:1).

7. "for other mortals as well as"—Parma MS.

8. "because he procured"—Parma MS; P is corrupt.

SUMMARY

The blowing of the shofar as a
signal of redemption from sin

A shofar with a patch which does not hinder its being blown properly is regarded as being all of a piece and therefore fit to blow. The shofar for New Year's Day must be all of a piece, even as Israel with their sins patched up on New Year's Day, being free of Satan's assaults, are all of a piece and are redeemed from death. The shofar is blown on New Year's Day in order that God judge Israel with compassion and acquit them (Sec. 1).

In referring to the shofar, the Psalmist asks that it be blown unto *the God of Jacob* (Ps. 81:2) and not unto the God of Abraham or the God of Isaac, because, unlike the seed of Abraham and Isaac, all of the seed of Jacob is holiness. Besides, Jacob was the only one of the Patriarchs to speak of the place where the Temple was to be built as the site for *the House of God* (Gen. 28:17).

In connection with the blowing of the shofar, two words from Ps. 81:4 are discussed: the first word, *ḥsh*, is construed as "notable" and is taken as referring to the month of Tishri, notable because of the four festivals occurring in it, during the first of which the shofar is blown; alternatively the word is construed as "cover," referring to the covers necessary for the top and the sides of the sukkah. The other word, *ḥdš* ("new moon"), is construed as "renewing"—that is, on New Year's Day, the day the shofar is blown, there is to be a renewing of one's way of living (Sec. 2).

For the leader; upon the Gittith.

*A Psalm of Asaph. Sing aloud unto God
our strength; blow the shofar¹ unto the
God of Jacob (Ps. 81:1-2).²*

1. JV: *shout*.

2. See Piska 38, n. 1.

1. Let our master teach us: Is a shofar which had a perforation in it that was patched up, regarded as fit to blow? Our Masters taught as follows: "If the patch hinders³ the blowing, the shofar is regarded as unfit; but if the patch does not hinder the blowing, the shofar is regarded as fit" (RH 3:4). And the proof? The verse *And the Lord God will blow the shofar* (Zech. 9:14): as the shofar of the Holy One, blessed be He, is all of a piece, so the shofar for New Year's Day must be all of a piece. Why? Because on New Year's Day the children of Israel are redeemed from death, [and hence are all of a piece].

R. 'Aqiba said: Although a man who has a blemish that unfits him for priestly service is regarded as fit to blow the shofar on New Year's Day, and also to blow the shofar that on the Day of Atonement proclaims the Jubilee, as is said *Thou shalt make proclamation with the blast of the shofar . . . throughout all your Land*⁴ (Lev. 25:9), he is not regarded as [fit to blow the silver trumpets] over the sacrifices in the Temple.⁵

And why do Israel blow the shofar on New Year's Day? In order that the Holy One, blessed be He, judge them with compassion and acquit them when He goes up for judgment, as is said *God is gone up amidst the blast* (Ps. 47:6). And whereby is the measure of judgment changed to mercy? By the sounding of the shofar,⁶ as the verse goes on to say, *the Lord amidst the sound of the shofar* (*ibid.*).⁷

Asaph said: Since the Holy One, blessed be He, has compassion for Israel on account of the shofar and acquits them at the judgment, take care to lift up shofars on New Year's Day

3. So Bertinoro and P.RH 3:6, 58a. See Tosafot on B.RH 26b.

4. *Throughout all your Land* is taken to mean, by all the people in the Land—whether physically sound or blemished.

5. See Num. 10:10, and Sif Num. 75.

6. "when He goes up for judgment . . . sounding of the shofar"—Parma MS.

7. The initial blast announces God's ascent to the judicial dais; but with the sounding of the shofar God's aspect changes, so that He becomes the Lord of mercy. See Piska 40:5; MTeh 47:2; PRKB, 151b; and Lev. Rabbah 29:3. "Whenever the shofar is mentioned in the sacred writings it augurs well for Israel" (Meq, 2, 222).

and blow them before the Holy One, blessed be He, for He will have compassion and acquit you at the judgment because of them. And the proof? From what we read in the lesson for the day: *Sing aloud unto God our strength; blow the shofar unto the God of Jacob.*

2. <Sing aloud unto God . . . blow the shofar unto the God of Jacob.> R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse in this way: *None hath beheld iniquity in Jacob* (Num. 23:21). What made Balaam single out Jacob for mention—not Abraham and not Isaac, but Jacob? Because he saw that dross—Ishmael and the children of Keturah—had come out of Abraham; dross—Esau and his princes—out of Isaac; as for Jacob, all of his seed is holiness, as is written *All these are the Twelve Tribes of Israel* (Gen. 49:28).⁸ Therefore Asaph as well as Balaam mentioned none of the Patriarchs other than Jacob: *Blow the shofar unto the God of Jacob ever.*

Another comment: Why the mention of Jacob rather than any of the other Patriarchs? Thus taught our Masters: "In the measure a man measures out—in the very same measure it is measured out to him" (Soṭ 1:7). In this connection consider the parable of a king who had three friends. When he was about to build a palace, he brought the first friend and said: Look at this place where I am about to build a palace for myself. His friend replied: Ever since I can remember, I have thought of it as a mountain. The king brought the second friend, who said to him: Ever since I can remember, I have thought of it as a field. The king dismissed him and brought his third friend, who said: Ever since I can remember, I have thought of it as a site for a palace. The king said to him: As you live, when I build that palace I will call it by your name.

The friends were Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, friends of the Holy One, blessed be He. Abraham called the place of the

8. MTeh 81:1 cites here the verse, *Thou art all fair, My love; and there is no spot in thee* (Song 4:7)—a verse which is understood as spoken by God to the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Cf. Piskas 4.1,2, and 10.13.

Temple "mount," as is said *In the mount where the Lord is seen* (Gen. 22:14). And Isaac called it "field," as is said *See the smell of my son is the smell of the field*⁹ (Gen. 27:27). But Jacob called it "place," as is said *How full of awe is this place! This is none other than the House of God* (Gen. 28:17). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Thou callest it "House" even before it is built!^{9a} As thou livest, when I build it, I will call it "House of Jacob": *O House of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord* (Isa. 2:5), and also, *And many peoples shall go and say . . . let us go up . . . to the House of the God of Jacob* (Isa. 2:3). And Jeremiah also had the same thought in the verse *Behold, I will turn the captivity of Jacob's tents* (Jer. 30:18). Asaph also, in speaking of the blowing of the shofar, took special care to mention only Jacob, as is said *Blow the shofar unto the God of Jacob*.

*Blow the horn at the new moon, at the ksh*¹⁰ *for the day of our feast* (Ps. 81:4). What is meant by *ksh*? It identifies the new moon inaugurating the month which is notable (*kswy*)¹¹ [because four festivals, New Year's Day, the Day of Atonement, the Feast of Booths, and the Eighth Day Festival occur in it].

Another explanation: *Ksh* in the sense of "cover" identifies the new moon as inaugurating the month in which the Feast of Booths (*skh*) occurs, [covers being necessary for the top and the sides of the booths].

In another comment, [the word *hdš*, "new moon," is understood to mean "renewing," so that the first half of the verse is read *Blow the horn at the renewing*]. What is meant by *Blow the horn at the renewing*? R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest said: When you take up the shofar for blowing, renew your way of living and repent. Then no matter how many sins have been

9. Targum Jonathan translates *field* as "the mount of the Sanctuary."

9a. The term *Beth el*, in the clause *And [Jacob] called the name of that place Beth el* (Gen. 28:19), is construed in Rabbinic commentary not as the site near Ai (Gen. 12:8), but rather as a phrase which means "House of God," said to be located in the area of Jerusalem. See B.Hul 91b, and Rashi on Gen. 28:17.

10. JV: *full moon*.

11. See Jastrow, p. 653a.

charged against you, I shall cover them up (*mksh*), as is said *Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth the iniquity, and passeth by the transgression . . . He will again have compassion upon us. He will cover up our iniquities* (Micah 7:18-19).

SUMMARY

The measure of mercy
on New Year's Day

In the *Tēfillah* on New Year's Day, nine benedictions, corresponding to the nine invocations of God's name in Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2), are required. That Hannah's prayer was spoken on New Year's Day is inferred from her asserting *The Lord will judge the ends of the earth* (1 Sam. 2:10). On this day God wishes to acquit His creatures, because He knows that when He wins against them, He loses, and when He loses against them, He wins. Thus the shofar is intended to remind God of the futility of winning a victory over His creatures (Sec. 1).

Of such futility God is well aware, for the phrase *For ever, O Lord* (Ps. 119:89) means that God always acts towards us not only with justice but also with the measure of mercy. Except for such mercy, we could not have endured even for one hour, as may be understood from what God did to Adam on New Year's Day when He brought Adam to judgment: instead of taking his life, as was required by the measure of justice after Adam's sin, God's measure of mercy allowed Adam to live on for 930 years and gave 70 years of life to each of his descendants. On every New Year's Day since, God has judged His children with mercy. And the shofar on New Year's Day is meant to remind God of the binding of Isaac, so that He will judge Israel with mercy and acquit them, because their ancestor was willing to die at God's bidding (Sec. 2).

In regard to the measure of His justice it is said *He will minister judgment to the heathen peoples according to the upright* (Ps. 9:9), that is, as He ministers judgment to the heathen peoples, God will reproach them for not having followed the examples of the upright ones among them. But according to the same verse, it is argued that God by the measure of His mercy will judge the heathen peoples at night, when they cannot be engaged in sin, and thus will dis-

cover uprightness in them. On the other hand, God judges Israel during the day, when they are engaged in good deeds, because He desires acquittal for His creatures, knowing full well that when He wins He loses and when He loses He wins. The shofar is meant to remind God that His loss is, in truth, His gain (Sec. 3/4).

The shofar's *těru'ah* ("tremolo") bespeaks the fear and anguish that precede the rendering of judgment; whereas the *těk'iah* ("sustained note") proclaims redemption.

Even when Israel are held guilty in the judgment, God looks upon the merit of the Patriarchs and for their sake acquits Israel. But in particular Israel's repentance wins His mercy. He pleads: Remake yourselves by repentance during the ten days between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement, and on the Day of Atonement I will hold you guiltless.

In connection with the season of repentance ushered in by New Year's Day, the significance of the number ten is expounded. The ten offerings on New Year's Day correspond to the Ten Days of Penitence. Nine rules of conduct are set down to correspond to the nine days between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement. The Ten Days of Penitence are also taken to correspond to the ten words by which the world was created, for when God on New Year's Day declares His world free of guilt it is as though the world were created anew. The Ten Days are also construed as corresponding to the Ten Commandments accepted by Israel, and are therefore Israel's advocates in the judgment. The ten verses alluding to God's sovereignty, the ten alluding to God's remembrance of His creatures, and the ten alluding to the shofar of revelation—all of which are recited on New Year's Day—are taken as corresponding to the Ten Days of Penitence. During these ten days, execution of judgment is suspended, so that Israel may be moved to penitence (Sec. 5).

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac led God to take an oath that He would keep always in remembrance what had happened on Mount Moriah and thus be disposed to accept Israel's penitence and to forgive their transgressions. The account of the binding of Isaac in the Land of Moriah is preceded by a variety of etymologies of the word Moriah. Then follows the account of the binding: the search for the place of sacrifice, the obstacles to the sacrifice, the testing of Abraham, the achievement of Abraham,

God's oath to keep the events on Mount Moriah always in remembrance (Sec. 6).

In the month of Tishri, whose zodiacal symbol is the Balance, God's reckoning and judgment of Israel takes place. But the word Tishri itself means "remission" and thus points to God's remission and forgiveness of Israel's sins (Sec. 7).

*Speak unto the children of Israel, saying:
In the seventh month, in the first day of
the month, shall be a solemn rest unto you, a time of
remembrance proclaimed with the blast of
horns, a holy convocation (Lev. 23:24).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: In the *Tēfillah* on New Year's Day, how many benedictions is one required to say? Our Masters taught us, so said R. Isaac: When New Year's Day comes around, a man is required to say nine benedictions.² And for what reason are there nine and not seven as on the Sabbath? The nine correspond to the nine invocations of God's name in the chapter (1 Sam. 2) where Hannah says her prayer (*Tēfillah*). The requirement of nine benedictions in the *Tēfillah* for New Year's Day may manifestly be inferred from the chapter with Hannah's prayer, because, according to R. Abba bar Kahana, in the chapter with Hannah's prayer it is written *The Lord will judge the ends of the earth* (1 Sam. 2:10). On what day does the Holy One, blessed be He, judge the [inhabitants of the] world and acquit them? It is on New Year's Day that He judges His creatures and acquits them. For assuredly He desires to acquit His creatures, not to hold them guilty, as is said *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked* (Ezek. 33:11), and again *That which the Lord desireth is to*

1. Originally the lesson for New Year's Day. See Meḡ 3:5. Now displaced by Gen. 21. Tos Meḡ 4:6 gives Lev. 23:23-25 as an alternative lesson.

2. The question concerns the number of benedictions in the *Tēfillah*. See RH 4:5 and Hertz, *APB*, pp. 844-58, 866-86. The two additional benedictions are "Praised be Thou . . . who rememberest the covenant" and "Praised be Thou . . . who hearest the sound of the shofar."

*make him righteous*³ (Isa. 42:21), that is, He desires to declare His creatures righteous. And why does He wish to declare His creatures righteous? Because, according to R. Judah bar Nahman citing Resh Lakish, the Holy One, blessed be He, reasons as follows: When I win I lose, and when I lose I win. I won out over the generation of the flood and I lost, for I had to destroy all the hosts of that generation, as is said *And He blotted out every living substance* (Gen. 7:23). And so it was with the generation of the dispersion of the races of man, and so with the Sodomites. But at the making of the golden calf, Moses won over Me by asking in entreaty, *Lord, why doth Thy wrath wax hot?* (Exod. 32:11), and I then won for Myself all the hosts of the children of Israel. Hence I acquit all My creatures in order not to lose them. It is on New Year's Day that I acquit My creatures.⁴ Accordingly, when I judge them, let them be sure to lift up shofars and blow them before Me, and I will bring to remembrance in their behalf the binding of Isaac and will acquit them at the judgment. Whence do we know that the blowing of the shofar is a reminder to God? From what is read in the lesson for the day, *In the seventh month, in the first day of the month . . . a time of remembrance proclaimed with the blast of horns.*

2. <*In the seventh month, etc.*> R. Tanhuma bar Abba began his discourse as follows: *For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth, and it standeth. They stand this day for Thy judgments,*⁵ *since all things are Thy servants* (Ps. 119:89-91). What do the words *For ever, O Lord* imply? That David said to God: "Master of universes, for ever Thou proceedest against us not only with justice but with the measure of mercy. Except for such mercy, we could not have endured even one hour." Scripture does not say here, "For ever, O God," but *For*

3. JV: *The Lord was pleased for His righteousness' sake.*

4. See Piska 9.3; and MTeh 4:6.

5. JV: *according to Thine ordinances.*

*ever, O Lord.*⁶ Hence with what attribute dost Thou judge us? With the measure of mercy which is the attribute of Thy Lordship, as it is referred to in the verse *The Lord, the Lord is God's name when He is merciful and gracious* (Exod. 34:6). And not us alone dost Thou so judge; Adam, the work of Thy hands, Thou didst judge in the same way: hadst Thou not included the measure of Thy mercy when Thou didst judge him, he would not have endured even one hour. And this measure of mercy Thou didst ordain beginning with him; as Thou didst judge him with mercy and didst acquit him, so wilt Thou for ever continue judging his children with mercy and acquitting them.

How did the Holy One, blessed be He, come to ordain the measure of mercy to go with the measure of justice? R. Hanina said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, wishing to create His world, observed the doings of the wicked—the generation of Enosh, the generation of the flood, the generation of the dispersion of the races of man, the acts of the Sodomites—He no longer wished to create the world. But then the Holy One, blessed be He, returned and observed the doings of the righteous—of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of all the other righteous. As He returned and observed them, He said: Am I not to create the world because of the wicked? Indeed, I shall create the world—and as for him who sins, it will not be difficult to chastise him. Nevertheless, when He was about to create the world with the measure of justice alone, He could not bring Himself to do so because of the deeds of the righteous, for whom justice alone would be too severe a measure. And when He was about to create it with the measure of mercy alone, He could not bring Himself to do so because of the deeds of the wicked, for whom mercy alone would be too indulgent a measure. What did He do? He made partners of the two measures, the measure of justice and the measure of mercy, and created the world, as is said *In the day that the Lord [of mercy*

6. The term God is taken to represent the divine aspect of justice; the term Lord, the divine aspect of mercy.

and the] God [of justice] made heaven and earth (Gen. 2:4).

And so it was with God's creation of Adam. When He was about to create him, and He observed that he would sin with the fruit of the tree, He said: If I create him according to the measure of justice alone, there will be no lifting him up after his fall; but if the creating of him were according to mercy, his consequent indulgence in pleasure would be a bad thing. What did He do? He made partners of the two measures, the measure of justice and the measure of mercy, and created him, as is said *Then the Lord [and] God formed man* (Gen. 2:7). And so He dealt with him. When he sinned, He judged him according to both measures, the measure of justice and the measure of mercy. He judged him according to the measure of justice in saying to him: *For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Gen. 2:17). Indeed as soon as he ate, He decreed death for him. How did He judge him according to the measure of mercy? By making mercy a partner of the measure of justice. For He did not tell Adam whether [the day of his death] was to be the day that mortals know or the day of the Holy One, blessed be He, the day which is a thousand years, as is said *For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday*, etc. (Ps. 90:4). Now because God had made mercy a partner of justice, Adam lived nine hundred and thirty years and left seventy years for each of his descendants, as is said *As for the term of our years, in them, [in God's thousand years], are threescore and ten*, etc. (Ps. 90:10).

Nay, more concerning God's mercy. As soon as Adam ate, the angels made their voices heard before the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said *And they made their voice heard, [saying], O Lord God*⁷ (Gen. 3:8). And what were they saying? Master of the universe, the one in the garden should surely be dead and gone, as is said *dead (mt), gone (hlk)*⁸ *in the garden (ibid.)*.

7. JV: *And they heard the voice of the Lord God*. See Gen. Rabbah 19:8, which says: "Read not *They heard the voice*, but '*They made their voice heard*.'"

8. Here *mtlkl*, "walking," is broken into two verbs. See Saul Lieberman's note in PRKM, p. 473.

Didst Thou not decree against him, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die?* The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Did I tell him precisely whether it was to be a day that mortals know or a day of Mine? I will give him one of My days—an extension (*lrwh*)⁹ of the day [*he thought was decreed for his death*] (*ibid.*): I will give him nine hundred and thirty years, and leave seventy years for his children.

Therefore David said: Master of universes, hadst Thou not judged Adam with mercy at the time he ate of the tree, he would not have remained alive for even one hour. And even as Thou didst judge him with mercy, so didst Thou ordain, beginning with him, that this day, New Year's Day, Thou wouldst judge his children with mercy. *For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast.* What is implied by *standeth fast*? Thy word which Thou didst ordain for Adam still stands: even as Thou didst judge him with mercy, so Thou judgest for ever all the generations after him. Hence it is said *For ever, O Lord.*

Thy faithfulness is unto all generations . . . They stand this day for Thy judgments. R. Joshua the Priest the son of R. Nehemiah said in the name of R. Huna the son of R. Isaac: If you will not take this passage as proving that God judges in mercy on New Year's Day, then consider the explicit statement in Torah where Moses says to Israel: *In thy distress, when all these things are come upon thee, at the end of the year,¹⁰ thou wilt return to the Lord thy God . . . and He will not forget the covenant of thy fathers* (Deut. 4:30, 31). The covenant made when? *In the days past, which were before thee, since the day that God created Adam upon the earth* (Deut. 4:32).

The Holy One, blessed be He, says: What happened in My judging of Adam? I bestowed upon him the gift of one of My days. Hence when you appear on New Year's Day before Me for judgment, come with shofars, so that no matter how many accusers be against you, I will be reminded of the binding of

9. The expression *lrwh*, "toward the cool," may by a slight change in vowels be read "to an (or: the) extension."

10. JV: *in the end of days*. But *yamim* may mean either "days" or "year."

Isaac and acquit you, as is said *Speak unto the children of Israel . . . in the first day of the month . . . a remembrance [proclaimed] with the blast of shofars.*

R. Hama¹¹ sent his disciples to listen to R. Levi, who was discussing this passage and who said: One verse here speaks of a *remembrance of the blast of shofars*; but in another place Scripture speaks of a *day of blowing the shofars unto you* (Num. 29:1). The explanation is that when New Year's Day falls on a weekday, the shofar is blown everywhere; but when New Year's Day falls on the Sabbath, the shofar is blown only in Jamnia.¹²

3/4. Another comment: *In the seventh month.* The text for the discourse upon these words is as follows: *He will judge the world [of Israel] and declare it acquitted; but He will minister judgment to the heathen peoples according to the upright* (Ps. 9:9). What is meant by *according to the upright*? R. Alexandri said: He will minister judgment to the heathen peoples by citing as examples the upright ones among them, the example of Rahab, of Jethro, of Ruth. How will He do so? He will say to each man of the peoples of the earth, "Why didst thou not bring thyself close to Me?" And each man of them will answer: "I was wicked, so steeped in wickedness I was ashamed." And God will ask: Wast thou more so than Rahab whose house was in the side of the wall so that on the outside¹³ she would receive robbers and then whore with them inside? Nevertheless, when she wished to draw near Me, did I not receive her and raise up Prophets and righteous men out of her? Or behold Jethro who was a priest unto idols. When he came to Me, did I not receive him and raise up Prophets and righteous men out of him?¹⁴ Or behold Ruth the Moabitess—when she came to Me, did I not receive her and raise up kings out of her?

11. "R. Hama"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Ammi."

12. See RH 4:1. Ordinarily the shofar may not be blown on the Sabbath. Jamnia was the seat of the Sanhedrin after the destruction of Jerusalem.

13. "on the outside"—Parma MS.

14. Eight priests and eight Prophets are listed as Rahab's descendants, and members of the Sanhedrin are named as descendants of Jethro. See Sif Num. 78.

Another comment: R. Levi said: God will judge the heathen peoples according to their uprightness. But how can He discover uprightness in them?¹⁵ By judging them at night. When at night? When they are asleep—the only time when they cannot be engaged¹⁶ in sin. For during the day they commit sins, they extort and rob. Therefore He judges them at night, when they are asleep, at a time that they are not engaged in sin, in order to let them stay alive in the world. Why does He let them stay alive? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not desire the destruction even of the wicked. Why not? Because they are all His creatures and the work of His hands. What potter wishes that his vessels be broken? Therefore He judges them at night, so that they may endure in the world: *He will minister judgment to the peoples according to the upright.* But when He comes to judge Israel, He will judge them during the day, for when they are asleep, they are idle—they are not engaged in good deeds. As soon as one of them stirs from his sleep, he goes at once, early in the morning, to the synagogue, recites the *Shema'*, says the *Tēfillah*, listens to the reading of the Torah, and listens to the elder [expounding the Torah].

R. Phinehas, citing R. Joshua¹⁷ ben Levi, who in turn cited R. Alexandri, said: Why do not Israel blow the shofar during the morning prayer (*Tēfillah*), but blow it only during the additional prayer (*Musaf*)? In order that when they stand up for judgment at the blowing of the shofar, they will have meditated abundantly during the *Tēfillah* on many good deeds and thereby be acquitted in the judgment. As David said: *A devotion of David. Hear the right, O Lord, attend unto my cry; give ear unto my prayer (Tēfillah) that goeth not out of feigning lips. Let my judgment come forth from Thy presence; let Thine eyes behold the uprightness [of one who has meditated upon good deeds]* (Ps. 17:1-2). *A devotion of David* refers to the words of devotion a man utters at the time he awakes from

15. "But how can He discover uprightness in them?"—Parma MS.

16. "the only time when they cannot be engaged"—Parma MS.

17. "R. Joshua"—Parma MS; PE: "R. Judah."

his sleep, "Blessed is He who revives the dead."¹⁸ *Hear the right, O Lord* refers to the recitation of the *Shema'*. *Attend unto my cry* refers to the morning prayer (*Tēfillah*). *Give ear unto my prayer* refers to the additional prayer (*Musaf*). Why is God asked to give ear to it? Because it *goeth not out of feigning lips*. In the time it takes to say the morning *Tēfillah* [and the first part of *Musaf*], we could not have been engaged in idle speech and deceitful words, but only in meditation on Torah, on gifts to charity, and on good deeds. It is then, during the *Musaf*, that a man prays *Let my judgment come forth from Thy presence*. Disregard the wicked deeds which we may have done, and, as David concludes, *Let Thine eyes behold the uprightness [of one who has meditated on good deeds]*.

Another comment: *Let Thine eyes behold the upright*. Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, Thou sittest in judgment and judgest us, and accusers stand before Thee, and advocates stand before Thee. The latter speak in defense, and the former speak in accusation. Look with favor only upon those who speak in defense. *Let Thine eyes behold the [ones who say "he is"] upright.*"

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: By your lives, thus I shall do. Why? Because I wish to pronounce you upright. As is said *The Lord is delighted in pronouncing [a man to be] righteous*¹⁹ (Isa. 42:21). And He Himself says, *I that speak of deliverance* (Isa. 63:1)—that is, I desire that you be acquitted in the judgment.

Come and look at two men beginning a lawsuit. One tries to silence²⁰ his opponent, saying, "Let me be first to speak." But the other will not let him, saying, "I will speak first!" When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: *Let us go to law together* (Isa. 43:26), Israel asked: Who will speak first? God

18. Cf. P.Ber 4:2, 4d. This benediction, in a slightly different version, is contained in the morning service, "Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who restorest souls unto dead bodies" (APB, p. 5). See also *Oṣar hat-tēfilloṭ* (Wilno, 1928), p. 120, note in *Tikkun tēfillah*.

19. JV: *The Lord was pleased for His righteousness' sake*.

20. Parma MS has "interrupt."

replied: You speak first: *Speak thou, that thou mayest be justified (ibid.)*, for if I win out over you in the lawsuit, I will be the one who loses. But if you win out over Me, then I will win. I won out over the generation of the flood and lost. So also I won out over the generation which saw the dispersion of the races of man, and also over the Sodomites. Yet did I not lose? I won out over Jeremiah, but did I not lose in destroying My House and exiling My children? On the other hand, at the making of the golden calf, Moses won out over Me, and thus I won. Hence it is My wish that you win out over Me. As Scripture says, *The Lord delights in pronouncing [Israel] righteous* (Isa. 42:21). Nevertheless, since I am called God of justice and God of truth, make sure when you stand before Me on New Year's Day to lift up shofars and blow them, [to remind Me that My loss is My gain]. Then no matter how many accusers you have, they will be disregarded.

5. <Another comment on> *In the seventh month . . . It is a day of tremolo (tēru'ah) unto you* (Num. 29:1): David said: There is nothing greater than the shofar, for at the time that the Holy One, blessed be He, ascends and sits on His throne for judgment, the shofar moves back the measure of justice and brings near the measure of mercy. In this connection, Judah bar Naḥman in the name of Resh Lakish cited the following verse: *God (Elohim) is gone up amidst a tremolo (tēru'ah)* (Ps. 47:6). [The verse implies that when Elohim—God in His aspect of justice—is gone up to His judgment seat at the tremolo of *tēru'ah*—the tremolo bespeaking the fear and anguish that precede the rendering of judgment]—then at once blow the shofar, so that even as the measure of justice draws near, [the *tēḳi'ah*, the sustained note, proclaiming redemption will be heard, whereupon] *amidst the sound of the shofar the Lord (YHWH—the aspect of mercy) will be (ibid.)*.²¹

21. See MTeh 47:2; *ʿAruḡat hab-bošem*, 2, 111; and above, Piska 40.1. See also Shalom Spiegel, in *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York, 1950), Hebrew Section, pp. 514–15.

[In another comment], the verse [previously read *In the seventh month, in the first day of the month*] is read *In the seventh month, in the one of the month*, etc. (Lev. 23:24). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the children of Israel: The nations of the earth, when they are summoned to judgment, have not the merit of their Patriarchs to depend on. But you—when you come into My presence for judgment, even if you are held guilty in the judgment, I look upon the merit of the Patriarchs and acquit you in the judgment. The children of Israel said to Him: But just the same on New Year's Day we are summoned for judgment. God said to them: Come and see that in the very verse [where I speak of the judgment on New Year's Day], I make mention [in your behalf of the merit] of the Patriarchs. Thus when I say *In the one of the month*, I allude to the merit of Abraham who is described as "one" in the verse, "Abraham was one" (Ezek. 33:24).²² When I go on to speak of *a reminder*²³ of a [horn's] tremolo (*ibid.*), I allude to the merit of Isaac. What other significance could the horn have [on New Year's Day] except to serve as a reminder to your God of the horns of the ram [brought as an offering in place of Isaac]?²⁴ Finally, in speaking of *the holy one who is called*²⁵ (*ibid.*), I allude to the merit of Jacob, whom the word "called" in the verse "Hearken unto Me, O Jacob, and Israel My called" (Isa. 48:12) [identifies as God's invited guest].

*Ye shall make*²⁶ *a burnt offering . . . unto the Lord* (Num.

On the terms Elohim, as meaning "justice," and YHWH, "mercy," see Sif Deut. 26, ed. Finkelstein, p. 41, and references in the relevant note. See also Piskas 1.2 and 5.10; and MTeh 56:3.

22. Since in Num. 29:1 it is already stated that a holy convocation is to take place on the day marked "one" in the seventh month, the second statement in Lev. 23:1 of the same thing is held to contain other matters, specifically that consideration is to be given to the merit of three Patriarchs, a reference to each of whom is discovered by means of subtle exposition.

23. According to the commentator, the statement "a reminder of a horn's tremolo" requires elucidation. *A day of blowing the horn*, as in Num. 29:1, would appear to be all that was required.

24. See Gen. 22.

25. Reading not *mikra'*, "convocation," but *mēkora'*, "one who is called." See Piska 41.5.

26. JV: *prepare*.

29:2). Elsewhere in this same passage, Scripture says, *Ye shall present a burnt offering unto the Lord* (Num. 29:8, 13, 36), but here it says, *ye shall make*. R. Isaac commented: What can the expression *ye shall make* mean in this context except that the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: Remake yourselves by repentance during the ten days between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement, and on the Day of Atonement I will hold you guiltless, regarding you as a newly made creature. Accordingly *make* in the verse from Numbers has the same meaning as *made* in the verse from Genesis *And God made the firmament*²⁷ (Gen. 1:7).

[On New Year's Day], how many offerings are we to add? God answered the children of Israel: "Ten: one bullock, one ram, seven yearling he-lambs, and one he-goat for a sin offering—ten altogether."²⁸ And why do I say ten? To have the offerings correspond to the Ten Days of Penitence. For if you are moved to penitence during these days, then when you come before Me on the Day of Atonement, even if your sins [reach up] from earth to heaven, I will make them white as snow. Therefore the prophet, in saying to the children of Israel: *Wash you, make you clean*, etc. (Isa. 1:16), set down in the passage nine rules of conduct, corresponding to the nine days between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement: (1) *Wash you*; (2) *make you clean*; (3) *put away the evil of your doings*; (4) *cease to do evil*; (5) *learn to do good*; (6) *seek justice*; (7) *bring the oppressor to the right path*; (8) *judge the fatherless*; (9) *plead for the widow* (Isa. 1:16-17)—nine rules altogether. And then what did he set down? *Come now, and let us have proof, saith the Lord*. What proof? God said: If you prove your repentance by deeds during these nine days, then no matter how many your iniquities I shall make you white as snow:²⁹ *Then*

27. R. Isaac seems to understand Num. 29:1 as implying "Make yourselves into an upsoaring unto the Lord," the word *'lh* being taken in its literal sense, "rising," or "upsoaring." See Tanhuma, *Ki tabo*, 1.

28. See Num. 29:2-5.

29. "What proof . . . make you white as snow"—Parma MS.

though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow (Isa. 1:18).

Another comment: Why Ten Days of Penitence? To correspond to the ten words by which the world was created.³⁰ On New Year's Day the entire world stands for judgment before the Holy One, blessed be He. Although the world deserves extermination because its creatures are soiled by transgressions, nevertheless the Holy One, blessed be He, declares His world to be free of guilt. So you may conclude that on New Year's Day it is as though the world were created anew.

Another comment: Why ten? To correspond to the Ten Commandments which the children of Israel took upon themselves at Sinai, for these are Israel's advocates. The nations of the earth refused to take them,³¹ but Israel took them out of love. And why³² were ten verses ordained alluding to God's sovereignty, ten alluding to God's remembrance [of His creatures], and ten alluding to the shofar [of revelation]?³³ To correspond to the Ten Days of Penitence.

Isaiah said: *But yet for [Israel] shall be a period of ten; if it return, then there will be removal*³⁴ [of sin] (Isa. 6:13). By these words the Holy One, blessed be He, implied: On New Year's Day I judge My world, and on that day I would be expected to execute judgment. Why then do I suspend execution for ten days? So that Israel may yet be moved to penitence. Why, accordingly, *yet for [Israel] shall be a period of ten*? In order that

30. See Ab 5:1 and Ps. 33:6; and B.RH 32a. The word *way-yomer*, "and He said," occurs ten times in the story of creation, nine in Gen. 1 and once in Gen. 2:18. See Moore, *Judaism*, 1, 415; 3, 126.

31. See Piska 21.3; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, 3, 81; 5, 30-31.

32. "why"—Parma MS.

33. These passages, included in the *Musaf* of the New Year's Day service, "chiefly refer to the three fundamental principles of our religion: (1) Existence of God, a Being that is King of the universe; (2) Divine Justice; and (3) Revelation." See M. Friedlander, *The Jewish Religion* (London, 1927), p. 404.

The antiquity of these passages in the liturgy is attested in RH 4:5 where the *mal'kiyyot*, *zikronot*, and *šofarot* are referred to. See Hertz, *APB*, pp. 869-87 for the present text of these prayers.

34. AV: *But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, then it will be removed.*

they be moved to penitence: *If [Israel] shall return, then there will be removal [of sin]*. For if you are moved to penitence in these ten days, no matter how many your sins, I shall remove them and declare you innocent. But if you will not be moved to penitence, know that your judgment will be pronounced on the Day of Atonement. And I shall not have brought this judgment upon you; you will have brought it upon yourselves. Why? Because in ordaining for you that you blow the shofar on New Year's Day, I intended by the blowing of the shofar to make you tremble and prepare yourselves for penitence. The prophet said: *When the shofar is blown in a city, and the people do not tremble* (Amos 3:6), it will then follow that *when evil shall befall the city, the Lord will not have done it (ibid.)*.

6. Another comment: *In the month which is the seventh (šēḥ'i)*. What other interpretation of the term *šēḥ'i* is possible? R. Berechiah said: "In the month of God's oath (*šēḥu'ata'*)" to Abraham. What were the circumstances that made such an oath necessary? [To begin with], when the Holy One, blessed be He, told Abraham to offer up his son, as is said *And He said: "Take now thy son"* (Gen. 22:2), Abraham asked: Which one of my sons? God said to him: *Thine only son (ibid.)*. Abraham replied: Both are only sons—Isaac is the only son I have [from one mother], and Ishmael is the only son I have from her who is his mother. God said: The son *whom thou lovest (ibid.)*. Abraham replied: Master of universes, are there different areas of love within a man, one of more love for one son and one of less love for the other? I love the one, and I love the other. God said: I mean *even Isaac*. And why did God talk at such length to Abraham? To show that He loved him.³⁵ Then Abraham asked: What am I to do with Isaac? God said: *Get thee into the Land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering (ibid.)*.

With explication of the term *the Land of Moriah*, a knot of Sages [have concerned themselves]. We shall cite each one of

35. Or: "To make Isaac that much more beloved to Abraham."

them. R. Yannai said: What is meant by *Moriah*? It is the place whence reverence (*mora'*) and awe (*yir'ah*) came forth into the world: *O God, Thou art awesome (nora')* out of Thy holy places (Ps. 68:36). And the elder R. Hiyya said: It is the land whence instruction (*hora'ah*) came forth: *For out of Zion shall come forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* (Isa. 2:3).

Another explanation of *Moriah*: R. Samuel said: It is the Land in which the Holy One, blessed be He, will direct concerning the wicked that they be sent down into Gehenna, as is said *Like sheep they are appointed for the nether world; death shall be their shepherd*—they will go down alive into the nether world—and *their form shall outlast the nether world*³⁶ (Ps. 49:15). And whence the directive? *From the habitation which is His*³⁷ (*ibid.*).

Another comment: *The Land of Moriah*. R. Joshua ben Levi said: It is the Land in which the righteous issues directives to the Holy One, blessed be He, decreeing things which He then does,³⁸ as is said *Then David and the elders, clothed in sackcloth, fell upon their faces. And David said unto God: "Is it not I that commanded the people to be numbered? . . . Let Thy hand, I pray Thee, O Lord my God, be against me, and against my fathers, but not against my people, that they should be plagued"* (1 Chron. 21:16-17).

Another comment: R. Judah bar Pedai'ah said: *Moriah* means that God showed Abraham where he was to go, saying to him, "To the Land which I will show (*mr'h*) thee."

Another comment on *Moriah*: Abraham said to God: "Master of universes, am I fit to offer Isaac up? Am I a priest? Shem is High Priest. Let him come and take Isaac from me for

36. JV: *and their form shall be for the nether world to wear away*. But see MTeh 49:3.

37. JV: *That there be no habitation for it*. In the comment, *the habitation* is taken to mean the holy habitation, that is the Temple. See 1 Kings 8:13. At Jerusalem, which is identified with the Land of Moriah, there is, according to tradition, an entrance to hell. See Gen. Rabbah TA, 55:7, and notes, p. 591; and Piska 41.2.

38. Cf. Piska 3.1.

the offering." God replied: When thou reachest the place, I will consecrate thee and make thee a priest. Accordingly, the term *Moriah* suggests that Abraham was to be a substitute for Shem, his replacement, the meaning of the term being the same as in the verse *He shall not alter it, nor change (mor) it* (Lev. 27:10).

Another comment: What is meant by *Moriah*? R. Phinehas said: It is the Land where the Lordship (*mar*) of the world resides, for of this Land it is said *Mine eyes and My heart shall be there perpetually*³⁹ (I Kings 9:3); and so understandably the place is lord (*mar*) of all other places: *And David went up, and all Israel, to Baalah*⁴⁰ (I Chron. 13:6).

Another comment: What is meant by *Moriah*? R. Simeon ben Yoḥai said: It is the Land which, if it were an arrow, would shoot up through the heavens directly to the heavenly altar. Here the word is derived from the stem *shot through* (*yrh*) (Exod. 19:13).

Another comment: It is the Land within which the incense of spices is offered up: *I will go to the mountain of myrrh*⁴¹ (Song. 4:6). The tradition that *Moriah* was *the mountain of myrrh* stems from your revered Masters.

Thereupon *Abraham rose early in the morning, and saddled his ass, and took two of his young men with him* (Gen. 22:3). And as he descended from the mountains,⁴² he was approaching⁴³ [the place God had chosen]. He walked all the first day, walked all day long. When he saw nothing whatever, he re-

39. This may imply that even when the Temple no longer stands, the sanctity of *Moriah* remains. See Gen. Rabbah 56:10 and MTeh 3:7.

40. The text goes on to say, *that is, to Kiriath-jearim*. According to Friedmann (n. 53), it is understood that while the Ark was in Kiriath-jearim, it was called Baalah (lord). All the more reason then for Jerusalem, the Ark's place of permanent residence, to be called "lord."

41. *The Land of Moriah*, which occurs nowhere else in the Bible, is now identified as being the site upon which the Temple was erected. See 2 Chron. 3:1.

42. The mountains surrounding Hebron are the highest in the Land of Judah. The journey from his home in Hebron to the Land of Moriah should have taken less than three days.

43. "approaching"—Friedmann's emendation. Parma MS and P: *wḵwr*, which might mean "and called out" or "and so on."

traced his steps [and continued walking and retracing his steps] until the third day. Then *Abraham lifted up his eyes, and saw the place afar off* (Gen. 22:4). And why did God not have him see it on the first day? So that the nations of the earth should not say: He was so stunned that he did not realize where he was going and stumbled onto the place. Therefore he did not see the place on the first day, nor on the second day, but only on the third day, when he saw from afar a cloud clinging to a mountain.

He said to Isaac: "My son, do you see anything upon the mountain?" Isaac replied: "I see a cloud on the mountain, clinging to it."⁴⁴

Abraham then turned to the young men, saying: "Do you see anything?" They replied: "No." He said to them: "Since my ass does not see it, and you do not see it, *Abide ye here with the ass*"⁴⁵ (Gen. 22:5).

And I and the lad will go yonder (kh); and we will worship, and come back to you (ibid.). The term used here for *yonder* is not the usual *ph* but the less common *kh*. Accordingly, said R. Joshua ben Levi, Abraham was intimating: We will go and see what is the outcome of the Utterance which pledged to me: *So (kh)*⁴⁶ *shall thy seed be* (Gen. 15:5).

Abraham did not say, "And I will come back." He said, *And we will come back*. What did he mean? To begin with, you may infer that he did not mean to let them know he was going to offer a sacrifice. Another explanation of *And we will come back*: In keeping with the verse, "The preparations of the heart are man's, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord" (Prov. 16:1), Abraham was given the good tidings that Isaac would come back with him.

Thereupon *Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering, and laid it upon Isaac his son; and he took in his hand the fire*

44. Cf. Piska 14.11.

45. By a slight change in vowels, the word 'im, "with," read 'am, "people," results in "people like the ass." See Gen. Rabbah 56:2.

46. The particle *kh* may mean "so," "here," or, if referring to a place mentioned previously, "yonder."

and the knife, etc. And Isaac spoke unto Abraham his father, etc.: "*Behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?*" (Gen. 22:6-7). Abraham replied: *God will see for Himself the lamb* (Gen. 22:8), that is, will Himself provide an offering, and if not, *my son be the lamb (śeh) for the burnt offering (ibid.)*. The word *śeh* in *śeh for the burnt offering* can also be read as the Greek *sy*,⁴⁷ meaning "thou": *thou for an offering* means that Abraham was saying to Isaac, "You are the offering." *Nevertheless, they went both of them together (ibid.)*. What is implied by *together*? That Isaac was not distressed by what his father had said to him. Even as the one rejoiced to make the offering, the other rejoiced to be made an offering of. Abraham rejoiced to bind his son as the sacrifice, and Isaac rejoiced to be bound as a sacrifice. Abraham rejoiced to cut the throat of his sacrifice, and Isaac rejoiced to have his throat cut.

While Isaac was walking with his father, what did Satan do? He came and placed himself on Isaac's right and said to him: "O thou hapless one, son of a hapless mother! How many fasts did thy mother fast, and how many prayers did she pray, until thou camest to her! And yet this old man, gone mad in his old age, is about to cut thy throat!"

Thereupon Isaac turned his face to his father, saying to him: Father, see this man and hear what he is saying to me!

Abraham replied: He came to dishearten you. The Holy One, blessed be He, will Himself keep His lamb in sight.

Thereupon *they came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built the altar there* (Gen. 22:9). And why did not Isaac build it with him? Because Abraham was taking care that no stone or pebble fall upon Isaac and make a mark upon him that would disqualify him as an offering.

Abraham built the altar, arranged the pieces of wood, and bound Isaac upon it. When Abraham took the knife to cut his

47. The term *śeh*, "lamb," is thus read alternatively with the clause preceding or the clause following. I follow Parma MS which reads *sw*; PE: "a live [human being (*hy*, taking *śeh* as the Greek *zē*)] will be the offering."

throat, Isaac said to him: Father, bind my hands and my feet, for the instinct of life is so strong, that when I see the knife coming towards me, I may move convulsively [and have you cut me in a place] that will disqualify me as an offering. His father bound Isaac as he had asked.

As Abraham was about to put the knife to Isaac's throat, the angels came weeping and lamenting before the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said *The angels cry without* (Isa. 33:7). What did they cry out? *The highways lie waste, the wayfaring man ceaseth: He hath broken the covenant* (Isa. 33:8). If Thou allowest the sacrifice, what of Abraham's reward for [helping] travelers on the highways? It was through such help that Abraham made Thee known to the world. Now *The wayfaring man ceaseth*—that is, Abraham's reward for [helping] wayfarers ceases. Wayfarers used to come from everywhere and would get bed and board from Abraham without cost, so that they made Thy name a blessing in the world. Besides, *He hath broken the covenant*: Thou breakest the covenant which Thou didst utter to Abraham, "But My covenant will I establish with Isaac" (Gen. 17:21). Behold, at this moment the knife is at his throat. How much longer wilt Thou wait?

R. Berechiah commented: *The angels cry without* (*hsh*). The word *hsh* may also be read *hisah*, meaning "an anomalous act." The angels cried out, "It is an anomaly on Thy part to have Isaac slaughtered."

Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Michael: "Why dost thou stand still? Do not let Abraham go on!" Michael began calling Abraham: *The angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said: "Abraham, Abraham"* (Gen. 22:11), in rapid succession. For Abraham was hastening to cut Isaac's throat, and like a man crying out in sharp distress, the angel burst out at him: "What art thou at?" Abraham turned his face toward the angel. When the angel burst out: "What art thou at? *Lay not thy hand upon the lad!*" (Gen. 22:12), Abraham asked: Then shall I strangle him? The angel replied: *Neither do thou anything unto him!* (*ibid.*). Abraham said:

The plain fact is that the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, told me to offer up my son, and yet thou sayest, "Do not offer him up!"

At once the [Word of] the Holy One, blessed be He, leaped out to him: *By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, because, etc., etc., thy son, thine only one* (Gen. 22:16). Why did God find it necessary to add the phrase *thine only one*? To imply that Abraham had said to the Holy One, blessed be He: If a man puts his fellow to the test, it is because he does not know what is in his fellow's heart. But Thou knowest what is in the hearts of men, and yet Thou didst put me to the test. Was it not unveiled to Thee from the beginning that I was willing to cut Isaac's throat? Thereto the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Before Me it is unveiled and known that even if I had asked thee for thy life, thou wouldst not have withheld it. Hence the phrase *thine only one* means "thy one and only life," as in the verse *Deliver my soul from the sword, mine only one from the power of the dog* (Ps. 22:21).

Abraham having asked God, "Why didst Thou put me to the test?" the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Because I wished to make thee known in the world and that not without good reason have I chosen thee from among all nations: *For now I have made known⁴⁸ that thou art a God-fearing man* (Gen. 22:12). Thereupon *Abraham prayed in that place: May the Lord take note [of what happened here], so that it will always be said: [What took place] this day on the mount, [where truly the ashes of Isaac are heaped up and kept for expiation of Israel's sins], is still seen by God⁴⁹* (Gen. 22:14).

According to R. Jeremiah, Abraham said: Master of the universe, it is revealed unto Thee that I could have given Thee an answer when Thou didst command me to sacrifice Isaac. If I had given Thee this answer, Thou wouldst have been left with-

48. By a slight change in vowels, "I know" may be read "I have made known."

49. For the paraphrase see Rashi, and the Targumim. JV: *Abraham called the name of that place Adonai-jireh (The Lord seeth); as it is said to this day: "In the mount where the Lord is seen."*

out an answer in return. For my answer could have been this: "Yesterday Thou didst tell me, *In Isaac shall seed be called to thee* (Gen. 21:12), and now Thou commandest me to cut Isaac's throat!" But I did not voice this answer. Instead I acted like a man who is dumb or one who is deaf: *But I am as a deaf man, I hear not; and I am as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth* (Ps. 38:14). Now each year on this day, when Isaac's children are called to account before Thee, no matter how many accusers bring charges against them, do Thou listen in silence and give no heed to⁵⁰ the accusers, just as I kept silent and gave Thee no answer. With thoughts such as these *Abraham prayed in that place: May the Lord take note [of what happened here], so that it will be said: [What took place] this day on the mount, [where truly the ashes of Isaac are heaped up and kept for expiation of Israel's sins], is still seen by God*⁴⁹ (Gen. 22:14). Can the day that Abraham is referring to in the phrase *this day* be any other than the very one on which he was willing to sacrifice Isaac, that is, New Year's Day?

In reply to Abraham's prayer the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Yes, I shall take note of what happened on this day." Abraham said to God: "Swear unto me." And God swore at once: *By Myself have I sworn, saith the Lord* (Gen. 22:16).

It is because God swore an oath to Abraham that R. Berechiah took the words *In the month which is the seventh* (*šēḇī'i*) to intimate "In the month of God's oath (*šēḇu'ata'*)" to Abraham.

[After God swore to him], Abraham asked: "And am I to go hence without offering a sacrifice?" The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Lift up thine eyes and behold the offering behind thee. *And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram*, etc. (Gen. 22:13).

And Abraham . . . offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son (*ibid.*). What is the precise meaning of *in the stead of his son*?⁵¹ R. Benaiah said: As Abraham offered the

50. "do Thou listen in silence and give no heed to"—Parma MS; P: "do not agree with."

51. "What is the precise meaning of *in the stead of his son*?"—Parma MS.

portions of the ram, he said: "Behold, these are truly portions of my son Isaac." And at each and every part of the sacrifice, he said this: Let it be acknowledged by Thee that in sacrificing this ram I have in fact sacrificed my son Isaac.⁵² Accordingly *in the stead of* is to be read as in the verse *Jotham his son reigned in his stead* (2 Kings 15:7), [that is, as king follows upon king, so sacrifice follows upon sacrifice].

What is meant by the apparently unnecessary words *after him caught in the thicket* (Gen. 22:13)? The Holy One, blessed be He, [was referring to the future. He] meant: Behold what is to come! Thy children who will succeed thee will one day be entangled and caught in sins like the ram in the thicket. What use are they then to make of a ram's horns? They are to lift up the horns and blow them. Whereupon I will be reminded of the binding of Isaac and will acquit them in the judgment.

For what happens with a shofar? A man blows into it from one end and his breath comes out of the other. Even so it will be with Me in regard to thy children. No matter how many their accusers, I will let their charges in one ear and out of the other.⁵³

And therefore Moses said to the children of Israel: Let the shofar be an instrument of defense for you. Lift up shofars on New Year's Day and blow them, *in the seventh month, in the first day of the month*.

7. A further comment: *In the seventh month*. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Surely the follies of children of the man of high degree*,⁵⁴ *yea, the lies of children of the man of rank*,⁵⁴ *when laid in the balance, they are together lighter than a breath*⁵⁵ (Ps. 62:10). What is meant by the words *Surely the follies* and the remainder of the verse? That

52. Abraham's willingness to offer his son was so complete that the sacrifice of Isaac is considered as having in effect taken place.

53. Provided, of course, the children of Israel have fully repented of their past misdeeds.

54. In both terms is seen an allusion to Abraham. See Lev. Rabbah 29:8.

55. JV: *Men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie; if they be laid in the balances, they are together lighter than vanity.*

all the follies and lies which Israel utter during the days of the year are laid up for a final reckoning. The words *when laid in the balance* intimate that the reckoning takes place in the seventh month under the seventh zodiacal sign whose symbol is Libra, the Balances. <And the name of the month? Tishri.> What is meant by Tishri? According to R. [Hiyya] ben Marya citing R. Levi,⁵⁶ that Thou remittest [*tishri*] and forgivest our sins [as being lighter than a breath]. When? *In the seventh month.*

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: In this world I am wont to be moved by the shofar to compassion for you. So, too, in the time-to-come I shall be moved by means of the shofar to compassion for you and bring your redemption closer to hand. How do we know? Because we read in the haftarah: *Blow ye the shofar in Zion, sound, etc. For the day . . . cometh, for it is at hand* (Joel 2:1).⁵⁷

56. "citing R. Levi"—Parma MS .

57. Nowadays Joel 2:1 is not part of the haftarah for New Year's Day.

PISKA 41

SUMMARY

Zion and the shofar of redemption

Zion is to be the meeting place of study for the entire world, and so when God redeems Zion, the exiles will come and blow the shofar by way of summoning the world's inhabitants (Sec. 1).

All manner of good things may properly be spoken of as coming out of Zion, because Jerusalem is to be again the center for revelation, for religious instruction, for the expression of gratitude to God, for the punishment of the wicked. As in the past, the beauty of Jerusalem and the effectiveness of its expiatory rites will be widely acclaimed, and worrisome matters will be kept out of its city limits, while within the city itself business will thrive (Sec. 2).

Concerning the punishment of the wicked in Zion, it is said that those so steeped in sin as to have rejected God will be given over irrevocably to Gehenna; and to contain them, Gehenna grows wider and broader and deeper every day.

Though Israel's deliverance, as the true Prophets say, will come soon, let it be remembered that in the meantime God will continue to ordain punishment for the wicked and reward for the righteous (Sec. 3).

Concerning the revelation to come from Zion, it is said that when the Israelites stood at Sinai they declared their desire to hear the Commandments directly from God's mouth, and at their declaration all the Inclination to evil that they possessed was at once rooted out (Sec. 4).

Concerning the salvation to come from Zion, two verses from the Psalms are expounded with reference to certain liturgical usages, and Jacob is singled out as the foremost celebrant of the redemption. He alone of the Patriarchs will be invited to the banquet which God will prepare for the righteous in the time-to-come, when the shofar of redemption is blown in Zion (Sec. 5).

*Blow ye the shofar in Zion, and
sound the trumpet in My holy mountain;
let all the inhabitants of the earth
tremble; for the day of the Lord cometh,
for it is at hand (Joel 2:1).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: If the commission convened at Entab² is not able to proclaim by means of witnesses of the crescent that the new month has begun, can the new month be considered as having begun? R. Abbahu said in the name of the elder R. Hiyya: Even if without having witnesses, this special commission proclaims the beginning of the new month, it is considered as having begun, for Scripture says *Which ye shall proclaim* (Lev. 23:4)—with witnesses or without witnesses. Whether witnesses did not see the new moon, or witnesses did see it, the new month is considered as having begun, for it is said *Which ye shall proclaim*.

And why was the commission which was responsible for intercalating days into months convened at Entab? Because Entab[’s obscurity made the place safe] for the commission’s meetings; and therefore when New Year’s Day fell on a Sabbath, the shofar was blown [not only at the Sanhedrin’s regular meeting place in Galilee, but also] at Entab, the place where the commission to intercalate months into years and days into months was regularly convened.³

1. At one time the haftarah for New Year’s Day was not Jeremiah 31:2–20, but Joel 2. See Tanhuma, *Way-yiṣlah*, 2; and Piska 40.7.

2. Enetaba was a village in Judea near Lydda, where, in the middle of the second century, after the Sanhedrin’s removal to Galilee, the new moon used to be proclaimed by a special commission (or: tribunal), in keeping with the requirement that the proclamation of the new moon be made in Judea, in the vicinity, that is, of Zion’s holy mountain (B.Sanh 11b). Enetaba’s insignificance and obscurity was the means used by Jewish authorities to elude Rome’s vigilance. See Alon, *Tolēdot*, 2, 137, n. 334; E. Z. Melamed, *Pirke minhaḡ wē-halakāh*, 2d ed. (Jerusalem, 5720/1960), pp. 18, 182; and Hugo Mantel, *Studies in the History of the Sanhedrin* (Cambridge, 1961), p. 183.

3. See Piska 40.2, end; and B.RH 25a. I am indebted to Professor Hugo Mantel, who in a letter (March 2, 1966) elucidated for me the meaning of the two preceding paragraphs.

Whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Zion is [again] to be the meeting place [for intercalating months into years and days into months] for the entire world, as is said *For out of Zion shall go forth instruction, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem* (Isa. 2:3). Therefore, when I redeem Zion and its exiles, as is said *Zion shall be redeemed with justice, and they that return of her with righteousness* (Isa. 1:27), they will come and [again] blow the shofar within it. And the proof? The verse in the haftarah: *Blow ye the shofar in Zion*.

2. *Blow ye the shofar in Zion*. R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse as follows: *The joy of the whole earth, Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King is beautiful in situation (nof)* (Ps. 48:3). [It is not likely that "The joy of the whole earth . . . Mount Zion" should be termed merely "beautiful in situation (nof)."] Therefore], what is really meant by *beautiful* NOF? "The beautiful bride (*numfe*)."⁴

Another explanation: *Beautiful* NOF, said R. Hanania bar Papa, means "beautiful because of its spreading branches (*'nf*)."⁵ As the fig tree, rooted deep in the earth and sending up a straight trunk with branches spreading out on all sides, is called beautiful, so, too, Jerusalem is called "beautiful because of its spreading branches"—that is, [the influence of] Jerusalem is destined to keep enlarging and ascending, as is said *And there was an enlarging, and a winding about still upward* (Ezek. 41:7).⁵

Another comment: *Beautiful* NOF means, according to R. Berechiah, that Jerusalem is beautiful in her waving (*hnfh*) of the 'omer.⁶ And according to R. Isaac, Jerusalem is beautiful

4. Taking the Hebrew *nof* to be a cognate of the Greek *nymphē*. Mount Zion, which is in Jerusalem, represents Israel—the bride of God (see Piskas 5.4–5 and 31.10; and Revelation 21:2). Mount Zion is thus "the joy of the whole earth," since its very existence attests to the fact of God's revelation to man and to His concern for man's well-being.

5. See Sif Deut. 1 and Friedmann's n. 42.

6. The 'omer of barley offered on the sixteenth day of Nisan (Lev. 23:10–14). See Piska 18.4, for the manner of waving the 'omer toward all sides of the compass in order to counteract the effect of blasting winds and noxious dews.

The grain for the 'omer, when ripe enough, had to be taken from a field near

because it is the place whither the nations will be [drawn and thence] waved to their destruction.⁷

And R. Levi said: *Beautiful* נֹפ, because wave after wave of praise comes to her—all avow that she is beautiful and extol her. Tyre herself had to say of herself *I am of perfect beauty* (Ezek. 27:3), but of Jerusalem, every one says "How comely and praise-worthy is this city," describing her as "The perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth" (Lam. 2:15).

Another explanation of *beautiful* נֹפ. R. Levi said: She is made beautiful by the waving (*nof*) of willow branches carried by the priests as they march around the altar [on the Feast of Tabernacles].⁸

Another explanation: *Beautiful in situation, the joy of the whole earth*. R. Johanan said: Outside of Jerusalem there was an arcade called the "Arch of Accounts,"⁹ and when people had accounts to settle they used to go and settle them under the Arch which was entirely outside Jerusalem, so that in the city itself all they did was eat, drink, and be merry.

Another comment: *Beautiful in situation, the joy of the whole*

Jerusalem (Men 10:1). The Rabbis regarded the bringing of the 'omer as a repayment to God for the manna given in the wilderness. See JE, 9, 399. Jerusalem is thus beautiful because in it an entire people assembles to express gratitude by means of the 'omer offering.

7. In a passage construed to refer to the fall of Sennacherib—a passage taken in this comment to symbolize all like attempts upon Jerusalem—we read: *The Lord cometh [to Zion] to overwhelm the nations in a wave of destruction, by means of a bride upon the cheeks of the nations that leads them into the error [of attacking Zion]*. See Isa. 30:28, and the comment thereon in MTeh 1:20; and Piska 40.6. Jerusalem, accordingly, is the place where punishment is to be administered to the wicked—hence Jerusalem is "the joy of the whole earth," for there the wicked are to receive their punishment.

8. The priests used to circle the altar seven times. As they were taking leave of the altar they used to say: "O altar, beauty appertains to thee." See Suk 4:5, and MTeh 48:2.

Since Jerusalem is the place where men's sins are expiated, "the joy of the whole earth" includes the 70 heathen nations in whose behalf 70 bullocks were offered up during the Feast of Tabernacles.

9. A sort of Exchange, where adverse reckonings may conceivably cause grief to people. See Lam. Rabbah on 2:15; and Exod. Rabbah 52, end.

earth. Beautiful because its situation (*nof*) is such that dew showers down from it and makes the ears of grain so heavy that they bend and wave (*nof*)—such is the abundance Jerusalem bestows¹⁰ that it makes the whole earth rejoice.

Another comment: *Beautiful in situation, the joy of the whole earth*. R. Jonathan of Beth Gubrin went into Jerusalem with goods in his hand to sell. But because business was slow and dull, he said: Is this *the joy of the whole earth*? No sooner had he said this than he sold all that he had in his hand.

Mount Zion on the sides of the north. But is Zion in the north? Is it not, in truth, in the south [of the Land of Israel]? What then is meant by *the sides of the north*? That the offerings presented in Jerusalem are presented on "the side of the altar northward"¹¹ (Lev. 1:11).

And what is meant by *the city of the great king*? The city of *the great King*, [of God].

Another comment: *Beautiful in situation, the joy of the whole earth*. R. Levi said: Joy comes out of Zion: *And the ransomed of the Lord shall . . . come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads* (Isa. 35:10). Blessing comes thence: *Like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever* (Ps. 133:3). Torah comes from Zion: *For out of Zion shall come forth the law* (Isa. 2:3). Help for Israel comes out of Zion, as is said *Send forth thy help from the Sanctuary, and support thee out of Zion* (Ps. 20:3). Life comes out of Zion: *There the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever* (Ps. 133:3). Salvation out of Zion, as is said *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion!* (Ps. 14:7). And the blowing of the shofar, whereby He will announce that the redemption of Israel is at hand, will come out of Zion: *Blow ye the shofar in Zion, and sound the trumpet in My holy*

10. ZA suggests that the comment is based on the verse *Like the dew of Hermon, that cometh down upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the blessing* (Ps. 133:3).

11. See Piska 5.4.

mountain . . . for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is at hand (Joel 2:1).¹²

3. Another comment: *Blow ye the shofar in Zion*. The discourse begins by citing the following passage: *For lo, they that go far from Thee shall perish; Thou dost commit irrevocably*¹³ *all them that [reject Thee and] go astray from Thee. But as for me, the nearness of God is my good; I have made the Lord God my refuge, that I may tell of all Thy works* (Ps. 73:27-28). David said: It is because he who goes far from Thee in this world will perish in the world-to-come that I declare *For lo, they that go far from Thee shall perish*.

[Since it is already said that they who go far away from Thee will perish], what does the verse mean by going on to say *Thou dost commit irrevocably all them that [reject Thee and] go astray (znh) from Thee*? This part of the verse refers particularly to the wicked who so steep themselves in sin as to bring themselves to reject (znh) Thee altogether. Such as these in turn—what else is one to do with them?—these Thou givest over irrevocably to Gehenna. Why? Because they went far away from Thee and they also rejected Thee altogether. The expression *Thou dost commit irrevocably (šmt)* means “for ever,” as in the verse, “shall be committed for ever (šmt) to him that bought it, throughout his generations” (Lev. 25:30).

R. Phinehas and R. Huna taught: The wicked say tauntingly, “How many myriads can Gehenna hold? Two hundred myriads? Three hundred myriads? How can it ever hold the many myriads more of the wicked who appear in every generation?” To them the Holy One, blessed be He, replies: By your downfall! As ye increase in the world, Gehenna, too, increases, grow-

12. Cf. MTeh 14:6. All manner of good things may properly be spoken of as coming out of Zion, for Jerusalem is the center for revelation, for religious instruction, for the expression of gratitude to God, for the punishment of the wicked; moreover, the beauty of Jerusalem and the effectiveness of its expiatory rites were widely acclaimed; and finally worrisome matters were kept out of its city limits, whilst business within it thrived.

13. JV: *destroy*.

ing wider and broader and deeper every day: *Tophet*¹⁴ is ordained of old . . . He hath made it deep and large (Isa. 30:33). Hence *For lo, they that go far from Thee shall perish* [is followed by the statement *Thou dost commit irrevocably all them that (reject Thee and) go astray from Thee*].¹⁵

[In another comment, the verse is read] *For lo, they that say it is far off from Thee shall perish . . . But as for me, the nearness of God is my good* (Ps. 73:27-28). Note that the text does not read *As for me, the nearness of God is my good*; instead it reads *But as for me*.¹⁶ To what does the contrast implied by saying *But as for me* refer? To the questions asked of Balaam and of the Prophets of Israel [with regard to deliverance]. When Balaam was asked: "Do the children of Israel have a time set for their deliverance?" he replied: Yes. When he was asked, "When is it to be?" he replied: It is far off. *I see it, but not now; I behold it, but not nigh* (Num. 24:17), thus putting far off the time designated for judgment of the nations. But when the Prophets of Israel were asked, they replied: The judgment is at hand: *For the day of the [heathen nations'] calamity is at hand* (Deut. 32:35). When Jeremiah came, he said: *Howl ye; for the day of the Lord is at hand* (Isa. 13:6).¹⁷ When Malachi came, he said that it was at hand: *For, behold, the day cometh, it burneth as a furnace* (Mal. 3:19). When Joel came, he spoke as they did: *Blow ye the shofar in Zion . . . For the day of the Lord cometh, for it is at hand*.

Accordingly, David said: *For lo, they that say it is far off from Thee shall perish*. That is, Balaam and his companions who put the time [of judgment] far off perished out of the world. But as for the Prophets of Israel, Thou hast been good to them because they announced that the time [of judgment] was near.

14. *Tophet* is taken as derived from the stem *pth*; hence, "that which opens," or "expands."

15. Quick destruction being a lesser punishment than eternal damnation.

16. "Note that the text . . . instead it reads *But as for me*"—Parma MS.

17. In his n. 29 Friedmann says that because this verse occurs in a prophecy concerning the fall of Babylon, it may be considered as being part of Jeremiah's utterances.

Be good to me, for I am like them; I am one who announced that the time [of God's judgment] was at hand: *But as for me, who announced that the nearness of God was at hand, be good to me.*¹⁸

That I may tell of all Thy works (Ps. 73:28). R. Phinehas said in the name of R. Aḥa: Even though the Holy One, blessed be He, finished the creating of the world and rested from all His work, as is written *On the seventh day God finished His work . . . and He rested*, etc. (Gen. 2:2), yet He does not desist from two works: He continues to ordain punishment for the wicked, and to ordain bestowal of reward upon the righteous.¹⁹

4. *Blow ye the shofar in Zion.* These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! . . . Then will Jacob rejoice, Israel will be glad* (Ps. 14:7, 53:7). This verse has reference to the time when the Israelites stood at Sinai, and Moses said to them: The Holy One, blessed be He, desires to give you the Torah; to which they replied: Our teacher, Moses, *All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, but we would hear*²⁰ (Exod. 24:7)—that is, we desire to hear it directly from His mouth. According to R. Ḥanan who cited R. Aḥa, the answer which they gave Moses was pleasing to

18. Instead of *my good*, as above. As elsewhere, the term *Elohim*, "God," is taken to refer to the divine aspect of judgment.

19. See Piska 23.8.

20. JV: *and obey*. These words are taken by the commentator as having been uttered on the fifth of Sivan, one day before the giving of the Ten Commandments (see Rashi). The next day the children of Israel heard the first Two Commandments directly from God's own mouth, at which time, as they heard God say *Thou shalt have no other gods before Me*, their Inclination to evil left them. But the sound of God's voice terrified them, "and they said unto Moses: 'Speak thou with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die'" (Exod. 20:16). Moses then repeated to them the other Eight Commandments, so that the people did not hear them directly from God. Moses, in repeating these commandments, referred to God in the third person (see Mek, 2, 228). As soon as they said to Moses "Speak thou with us," the Inclination to evil returned to them. The Inclination to evil will not again depart from the children of Israel until the final redemption, when salvation will come out of Zion (so R. Nehemiah in Yalkuṭ, 2, 981), at which time *Jacob will rejoice, Israel will be glad*.

the Holy One, blessed be He, and at once all the Inclination to evil that was in them was rooted out.

It was of this answer that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: *Oh that they always had such a heart as this [one of double strength] (lēḥab) to fear Me!* (Deut. 5:26). The text does not say "a heart (*lēḥ*)," but *a heart . . . of double strength (lēḥab)*, to indicate that their divided heart containing both the Inclination to good and the Inclination to evil was transformed into a single heart containing only the Inclination to good.

R. Johanan commented: The Holy One, blessed be He, took His stand saying *Oh that they always had such a heart as this one of double strength!* Should not someone have spoken up then to ask "Indeed, whose is the responsibility to provide such a heart? Is it not for Thee to root out the Inclination to evil from among us?" If those at Sinai had then asked not to have to die, they would never have died. If they had asked that the Inclination to evil be rooted out, it would have been rooted out of them. As the matter stands, however, *The Lord hath not given you a heart to know* (Deut. 29:3).

⟨The Holy One, blessed be He, said:⟩ Because I said, *Oh that they always had such a heart as this one of double strength!* you, too, will finally say with longing, *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come out of Zion!*

5. Another comment: [In the Book of Psalms] the words *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come out of Zion!* (Ps. 14:7, 53:7) occur twice. R. Huna explained: Because children in the synagogue say twice—once in the morning and once in the evening—the words *Save us, O Lord our God* (Ps. 106:47), "Save us, O Lord our God,"²¹ therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, says twice, *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come out of Zion!*²²

21. "The custom mentioned by Huna still survives in the Sephardic rite: it is the first privilege which a child has." See Montefiore, *RA*, p. 518.

22. From the context it is not entirely clear who says the words *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come out of Zion!* The preceding comment takes the

Oh that the time of judgment were come so that I might announce your redemption is at hand!

R. Judah the son of R. Shallum said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish: <This reason for the repetition of the words *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come out of Zion!* is not accurate. Rather> it is because [Israel petitions God] twice, once in the Psalms, *Save us, O Lord our God, gather us and deliver us*²³ *from the nations* (Ps. 106:47), and again in Chronicles, *Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together and deliver us from the nations* (1 Chron. 16:35), that the Holy One, blessed be He, says twice in response, *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come out of Zion!*²⁴

Another comment: *Oh that . . . salvation . . . were come! . . . Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel be glad.* Would not one have expected Scripture to say, "Let Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob rejoice, and let Israel be glad"? Why then does it say, *Let Jacob rejoice?* To imply that it is Jacob who grieves when Israel grieve and when they are in trouble. Therefore when redemption comes to Israel, he will rejoice with them: *Let Jacob rejoice, let Israel*

words to have been uttered by Israel. But here the words are understood as being uttered by God. Then, too, the repetition of words in Scripture has, according to Rabbinic exegesis, special meaning which must be sought out.

23. The words *and deliver us* are not in MT.

24. See MTeh 14:6. ZA offers a subtle comment. He points out, to begin with, that Ps. 14:7 and Ps. 53:7 differ from each other. In the first Psalm *salvation* is spoken of in the singular as being of one kind; and the Lord, the Merciful One, is referred to as He who restores the captivity of His people. In the second Psalm *salvation* is spoken of in the plural as being of two kinds; and God, the Just One, is referred to as He who restores the captivity of His people. These differences reflect the two kinds of redemption: the one given in God's mercy, when in the words of Scripture, *Ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace* (Isa. 55:12); and the other, the one which will come after God renders judgment, when in the words of Scripture, *They shall come with weeping* (Jer. 31:8) and *In the midst of thee [there will remain] an afflicted and poor people* (Zeph. 3:12). Now when the children of Israel pray in the words of the Psalmist for an ingathering in mercy, God, as it were, joins in prayer for Israel's simple and speedy salvation, so that He, as Lord of mercy, may restore the captivity of His people. On the other hand, when the children of Israel pray in the words of the Chronicler to be delivered from the nations and that judgment be rendered, God, too, prays for several kinds of salvation required in judgment and that He, as God of judgment, may restore the captivity of His people.

be glad. When will Jacob rejoice? When Israel is glad. This interpretation is in keeping with that of Resh Lakish who asserts: The matter is very difficult to understand, for it says in substance that when Israel sin here, Jacob is afflicted there, where he lies in the Cave of Machpelah. By the same token, when redemption comes, he will rejoice with them: Jacob will rejoice when Israel is glad.

But R. Alexandri interpreted the words in another way: Why does the text say, *Let Jacob rejoice*? Because when a man has a son to be circumcised, or when he takes a wife, who shares in his gladness? He who is invited to the banquet. Similarly, Jacob will be invited to the banquet of the Holy One, blessed be He, which He will prepare for the righteous in the time-to-come: *Hearken unto Me . . . O Israel, My called* (Isa. 48:12). What is meant by *My called*? My invited guest. Therefore, when the banquet of redemption comes, he will rejoice, for it is he who will be invited to the banquet: *Let Jacob rejoice*.

When will all these things happen? When the shofar [of redemption] is blown in Zion, as is said *Blow ye the shofar in Zion, and sound the trumpet in My holy mountain . . . for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is at hand* (Joel 2:1). So R. Tanhuma Berabbi expounded the verse.

SUMMARY

The Lord's remembering of Sarah

A man must not arrogantly remind a proselyte of his former heathenish deeds or the heathenish deeds of his fathers. Instead, he ought to pattern himself after God, who was careful not to let it be known what kind of tree Adam ate of, so that it could not be said that a particular kind of tree brought death to the world. A man who is careful not to hurt the feelings of others will be rewarded even as Sarah was (Sec. 1). God may be depended on to keep His word to reward the humble (Sec. 2).

Aside from His rewarding of Sarah, it is said that God had to remember her when He did, for if He had not remembered her, the chronology for the exodus from Egypt as given in Scripture would have turned out to be false and the Torah would have been deemed a fake.

It is also said that justice required God to give Sarah a child when He did. The angels protested against the injustice of His allowing Lot's daughters to become pregnant and not allowing Sarah to have a child. True, the daughters of Lot thought that the world had been destroyed and that God had saved them in order that a new race of men might come from them. Nevertheless, argued the angels, all that Lot's daughters had to do was sleep once with their father in order to bring bastard children into the world, but righteous Abraham had been grieving for many years because his wife Sarah could not bear a child.

We are told further, in connection with God's giving a child to Sarah, that after the destruction of Sodom Abraham journeyed to the land of the Philistines. When their king, Abimelech, was about to take Sarah by force, God caused all the openings of the body in people everywhere in the kingdom to dry up. By so doing He meant to clear up any notion that Abimelech had succeeded in forcing Sarah, for the Philistines said: "If such dryings up befell

us, even though she was far from us, then what of the person next to whom she slept—what judgments must have been executed upon him?"

After Abraham interceded with God on behalf of the Philistines, they were relieved of the constraint upon the openings of their bodies, and their women conceived and bore children. And the angels once again rose in complaint: "Abimelech's wife is remembered; even his maidservants are. But Sarah remains barren. Justice demands that she also be remembered." And so the Lord remembered Sarah (Sec. 3).

On the day that Sarah bore her child, all barren women everywhere in the world were remembered with her, every physically handicapped person was healed; and the light of the sun was intensified forty-eight times over what it usually is (Sec. 4). When as a result of Abraham's intercession in behalf of the Philistines, God gave children to them, He was being mindful not only of Abraham but of Sarah as well (Sec. 6).

The word *Lord* in the statement *The Lord remembered Sarah* (Gen. 21:1) intimates that God alone is the Lord of life and death: He does not turn over to any creature the key of the cloud, the key of the grave, or the key of the womb (Sec. 7).

Some observations follow on the meaning of the verb *pqd*, hitherto read "remembered." The verb may also mean "commanded," and a list is given of those who were commanded by God and obeyed, and others who were commanded and did not obey (Sec. 8). Finally, different shades of meaning of the verb *pqd* in different contexts are given, to show that the word always refers to God's providence (Sec. 9).

And the Lord remembered Sarah as

He had said, and the Lord did unto

Sarah as He had spoken (Gen. 21:1).¹

1. Let our master teach us: What are the specific kinds of abuse which it is said that a man should not be guilty of towards his fellow? In answer our Masters taught as follows: "One should

1. Gen. 21:1-34 is the lesson read on the first day of New Year.

not ask, 'What is the price of this object?' when one has no intention of purchasing. If a man is a repentant sinner, one should not say to him, 'Call to mind your former deeds.' If he is a proselyte, one should not say to him, 'Call to mind your heathenish deeds and the heathenish deeds of your fathers'" (BM 4:10).

The Holy One, blessed be He, says: It will suffice if thou, in a manner of speaking, act like Me. I, when I created My world, did not wish to abuse any creation of Mine, and therefore I have not made it known what kind of tree Adam ate of and so died. What has been surmised? Wheat,² according to R. Meir. A fig tree,³ according to R. Jose. Grapes,⁴ according to R. Judah the son of R. Il'a'i. According to R. Abba of Akko, it was the ethrog:⁵ *A tree [which has the same aroma as its] fruit*⁶ (Lev. 23:40). Whatever it was, God has not revealed its identity, and—said R. Azariah and R. Judah the son of R. Simon, citing R. Joshua ben Levi—He will not⁷ reveal it. Why not? That it should not be said: This particular kind of tree brought⁸ death into the world. For a somewhat similar reason, Scripture also says, *If a woman approach any beast, and lie down thereto, thou*

2. "The man who has never taken wheat bread into his mouth," the saying goes, "has no sense." Accordingly the tree of knowledge of which Adam and Eve ate must have been wheat whose stalks in the Garden of Eden grew—so tradition asserts—to the height of cedars of Lebanon (Gen. Rabbah 15:7).

3. Of the inside of the fig, R. Jose ben Zimra said, "It is good to eat, it is fair to behold, and it increases wisdom," even as of the tree of knowledge it is said *That the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise* (Gen. 3:6). See Eccles. Rabbah 5:10.

4. In a pejorative sense, in keeping with R. Judah ben R. Il'a'i's statement concerning "*Grapes of gall, they have clusters of bitterness* (Deut. 32:32): those clusters brought bitterness, [that is sorrow], into the world" (Gen. Rabbah 15:7). Or, in a laudatory sense, in accord with Raba's statement: "Wine and spices have made me wise" (B.Sanh 70a).

5. A kind of orange or citron used during the Feast of Tabernacles. See Lev. 23:40; and [Piska 51.2].

6. The proper text is *that the tree was good for food* (Gen. 3:6), which is taken to mean the ethrog. See Gen. Rabbah 15:7 and Lev. Rabbah 30:8.

7. "will not"—Parma MS and gloss in my own copy of P; PE: "thou art not to."

8. "brought"—MC and FT; Parma MS and P: "brings."

shalt kill the woman and the beast (Lev. 20:16). To be sure, the woman commits a sin, but what sin does the beast commit? None. It is put to death, nevertheless, lest, when it is seen, people will be tempted to say "This is the one on account of whom So-and-so was stoned to death," and hence the woman may be abused even after her death.⁹

And just as whoever abuses his fellow man is punished, so you find that anyone who, like Sarah, abases himself, will receive his reward. For she said: *Behold now, the Lord hath restrained ME from bearing* (Gen. 16:2). The Holy One, blessed be He, thereupon declared: Because thou didst abase thyself, saying *The Lord hath restrained ME*,¹⁰—thee, as thou livest, [not Abraham],—I shall particularly remember. And the proof of His remembering? The verse read in the lesson for the day *And the Lord remembered SARAH as He had said*.

2. *And the Lord remembered Sarah*, etc. R. Tanhuma began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of the verse which David, king of Israel, was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *For ever, O Lord, Thy word standeth fast in heaven* (Ps. 119:89). (Go find and open the gate on all that has been said about this verse in a previous Piska, on the passage *In the seventh month*, and thence continue the discourse).¹¹ Likewise, concerning the word of the Lord, Solomon said: *Yea, Thou spokest with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with Thy hand . . . saying* (1 Kings 8:24, 25; 2 Chron. 6:15, 16). Thou didst say to my father: *Behold, a son shall be born to thee . . . his name shall be Solomon, and peace and quietness shall be in his days*¹² (1 Chron. 22:9)—hast Thou not done so? Indeed Thou hast, as is said *And Judah and Israel dwelt safely* (1 Kings 5:5). Thou didst say to him: *He shall build a House for My name* (1 Chron. 22:10)—hast Thou

9. See Sanh 7:4 and Gen. Rabbah 15:7.

10. She blamed herself for not bearing children, exonerating Abraham of sterility. As a matter of fact, both were sterile. See B. Yeb 64a.

11. See Piska 40:2.

12. MT: *and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days*.

not done so? Indeed Thou hast, as is said *So Solomon built the House* (1 Kings 6:14). In short, *Thou spakest with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with Thy hand.*

Thou didst say to Abraham, *Look now toward heaven, and count the stars . . . So shall thy seed be [increased]* (Gen. 15:5)—and hast Thou not done so? For what did Moses say to the children of Israel? *Behold ye are this day as the stars of heaven* (Deut. 1:10). Thou didst say to Abraham, *I will certainly return unto thee when the season cometh round; and lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son* (Gen. 18:10). This was not something which Thou didst merely say; it was also something [which, despite infractions by those to whom Thy promises were made], Thou didst do:¹³ *And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said.* In short, *Thou spakest with Thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with Thy hand.*

3. *And the Lord remembered Sarah.* R. Eliezer said: Whenever it is said *AND the Lord*, it implies the Lord [of mercy], as well as His court [of angels of justice]. On this occasion the angels said: Master of the universe, justice demands that Abraham should be remembered. For if Thou wilt not remember him at this very moment, Thy Torah will be thought a fake. How so? R. Judah the Levite explained in the name of R. Shallum: Abraham was seventy years old when the Holy One, blessed be He, talked to him at the covenant pledged upon the halves of a heifer, and laid this decree upon him: *Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger* (Gen. 15:13). [What God was saying to Abraham was this]: Beginning with the time that thou hast seed, the four hundred years of thy children's servitude to a stranger will be considered as having begun. But the Torah, already in existence before the creation of the world,

13. God did not reckon sins such as Sarah's derisive laughter when she heard the angel say that she was to have a child; or Abraham's questionable behavior in the incident with Abimelech described in Gen. 20. Nor did God reckon with Solomon's questionable behavior. Invariably God keeps His promises to do good. For this reason the text says emphatically, *And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said.*

has a verse in it that says, *Now the time that the children of Israel dwelt in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years* (Exod. 12:40). [Because of this apparent discrepancy¹⁴ the angels said]: Today Abraham is one hundred years old, and if Thou dost not remember him now, Thou wilt make Thy Torah appear to be a fake, because Thou wilt have to put off the time of redemption. In all justice he must be remembered now. *And the Lord remembered.*

Another comment: *And the Lord remembered.* What is written in the passage preceding these words? *Then the Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven* (Gen. 19:24)—the destruction of Sodom. When the angels came, they led forth Lot and his two daughters. The daughters of Lot thought that perhaps the world was being destroyed as in the generation of the flood. And so they arose, made their father drunk, lay with him, and were with child by him, as is written *And they made their father drink* (Gen. 19:33).

R. Eleazar said: Usually a woman does not become pregnant in her first coition. Nevertheless, the two daughters of Lot, mastering the pain that attends the first coition, became pregnant. For their purpose was other than lewdness with their father. They said: God assigned to man no task other than that of¹⁵ increasing and multiplying. But lo, the world is now being destroyed as in the generation of the flood. How is it to be kept going? The answer must be that the Holy One, blessed be He, saved us only in order to keep it going by means of us. They did not know that only Sodom was to be destroyed. All they knew was that the angels had declared, *We will destroy this place* (Gen. 19:13). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I do not withhold

14. The discrepancy between 400 and 430 is reconciled by declaring that the decree concerning Israel's sojourn in Egypt for 430 years was issued at the covenant pledged upon the halves of a heifer (see Gen. 15:9-17), 30 years before Isaac was born, at which time Abraham was 70 years old. See Piska 15:7; Meḳ, 1, 111; and Sefer 'Olam Rabbah, ed. Ratner, p. 4. See also [Piska 49:5], n. 11.

15. "no task other than that of"—Parma MS. See Gen. 19:31.

the reward of any creature. Even though Lot's daughters did not think the matter through properly, nevertheless, I know what is in men's hearts: *I, the Lord, search the heart, I try the reins* (Jer. 17:10). It was because the intention of Lot's daughters was good that in the matter of marriage between the children of Israel and the Ammonites and Moabites, God prohibited an Ammonite man [from marrying an Israelite woman], but did not prohibit an Ammonite woman [from marrying an Israelite man]; God prohibited a Moabite man [from marrying an Israelite woman], but did not prohibit a Moabite woman [from marrying an Israelite man].¹⁶

[And so directly after the destruction of Sodom], the angels of justice said: Master of the universe, all these women had to do was sleep once with their father, in order to bring bastard children into the world, but this righteous Abraham¹⁷ has been grieving all these years because he is childless. Justice demands that he be remembered: *And the Lord remembered*.

Another comment: *And the Lord remembered*. What is described in the passage preceding these words? The destruction of Sodom. During the time that Sodom stood, Abraham lived in the regions nearby and would extend hospitality to travelers. But after Sodom was destroyed [and no more travelers came], he rose up and journeyed from those regions, betaking himself to the land of the Philistines, as is said *And Abraham journeyed from thence toward the land of the south*, etc. (Gen. 20:1). *And Abimelech king of the Philistines*¹⁸ *sent*, etc. (Gen. 20:2). When Abimelech sent and had Sarah seized, [the Word of] the Holy One, blessed be He, leaped out to him:¹⁹ *God came to Abimelech in a dream of the night* (Gen. 20:3). According to R. Johanan, God's appearing to Abimelech was one of the instances where the All-Pure saw fit to defile Himself.²⁰ When Abimelech

16. See Deut. 23:4; Piskas 29/30A. 1, 29/30B. 4; and MTeh 1:2. Ammon and Moab were the issue of the incestuous connection between Lot's daughters and their father.

17. "Abraham"—Parma MS.

18. MT: *of Gerar*.

19. Cf. Piska 3.3.4; and Piska 40.6.

20. When God communicates with the heathen, it is, so to speak, according to R. Issachar, a kind of pollution in the night. See Gen. Rabbah 52:5.

sought to have his will of Sarah, God revealed Himself at once, saying to him: *Behold, thou shalt die, because of the woman . . . for she is a man's wife* (Gen. 20:3). What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do to him? He caused all the wells of the body to dry up—Abimelech's and his household's and those of people everywhere in the kingdom: *For the Lord had fast closed up all the wombs* (Gen. 20:18), [that is, all the openings of the body]. R. Eliezer taught: The adults as well as the children, the men as well as the women, the servants also—the Holy One, blessed be He, closed fast the wells of their bodies. Not one of them could urinate, move his bowels, drop moisture from his nose or a tear from his eyes—all the wells were closed fast, sealed tight, dried up.²¹ And why such things? *For the sake of Sarah, Abraham's wife* (*ibid.*), in order to clear Sarah of suspicion. But how could such things clear her? In the following way: Imagine one of them, one of the Philistines, that is, standing about with his friend on the morning after Abimelech sent for Sarah, and saying to his friend: You cannot guess what happened to me last night! Such-and-such dryings up befell me. To which his friend replies: "Befell me, too." And as these two go on telling other people what befell them, the others say: "By heaven, one more night like the last and we're all dead men!" But just how would such talk clear Sarah of suspicion? Because the Philistines would go on to say this: "If such dryings up befell us even though she was far away from us, then what of the one next to whom she slept—Abimelech? Need you ask what befell him, what judgments were executed upon him?" Hence, *For the Lord had fast closed . . . for the sake of Sarah.*

When the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abimelech: *Behold, thou shalt die, because of the woman whom thou hast taken* (Gen. 20:3), Abimelech replied: Master of the universe, things concealed and unconcealed are all known to Thee. Since I did not touch her, wouldst Thou slay me? Truly, as Scripture tells, *Abimelech had not come near her* (Gen. 20:4), and so he asked: *Wilt Thou slay even a righteous Gentile?* (*ibid.*). In say-

21. "dried up"—Parma MS; PE: "covered up."

ing *even a righteous Gentile*, he could have meant, "Even though I am a Gentile, I am God-fearing." Or, taking the passage to read, *Wilt Thou slay this Gentile? then also righteous*, Abimelech could have meant: If Thou slayest me—if Thou slayest this Gentile, *then also righteous*, then the generation of the flood and the generation of the dispersion of the races of man were also, I maintain, righteous; if, that is, Thou didst punish them without serving warning upon them, as presumably Thou dost intend to punish me. *Wilt Thou slay this Gentile? then also righteous.*

Or again, by the words *this Gentile, then also the righteous* Abimelech could have meant: If Thou slayest the Gentile, Thou must also slay the righteous. If Thou slayest Abimelech, slay Abraham also. How could he demand such a thing? Because, according to R. Berechiah Berabbi the Priest, of what he claimed took place. By his account, Abimelech said: I asked Abraham, "What is she—your wife?" He replied, "She is my sister." Then I asked Sarah, "Are you his wife?" She replied, "No, I am his sister." Nevertheless, I went on to ask the people of his household, and they likewise said that she was his sister. *Said he not himself unto me: She is my sister? And she, even she herself, said: He is my brother. In the simplicity of my heart . . . have I done this* (Gen. 20:5): Scripture does not say "she" alone, but *and she*, the *and* signifying the members of Sarah's and Abraham's household who also declared her to be his sister: *In the simplicity of my heart and the innocency of my hands have I done this.*

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: *Yea, I know that in the simplicity of thy heart thou hast done this* (Gen. 20:6). Yet thou art not the one to be praised for not sinning. *It was I who withheld thee from sinning against Me (ibid.).* R. Levi said: God may here be likened to a man riding a horse before whom a child happened to fall. As the galloping horse was about to trample the child, the rider pulled on the bridle and the horse stopped. Every one began praising the horse, but the man said to them: Is it the horse that you should praise? ²² Had I not

22. "Is it the horse . . . praise?"—Parma MS.

pulled on the bridle, would the child have stayed alive? Likewise, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: *It was I who withheld thee from sinning against Me.*

Then God went on to say, *Restore the man's wife; for he is a prophet* (Gen. 20:7). Thereupon Abimelech rose early, restored Sarah to Abraham, did honor to Abraham, and begged him to pray in his behalf that God loosen the constraint upon the openings of his body. As Abraham prayed, all of the Philistines were relieved of the constraint upon the openings of their bodies. Nay more, all the female members of Abimelech's household conceived and gave birth to male children, as is said *And Abraham prayed unto God; and God healed Abimelech, and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bore children* (Gen. 20:17). Abraham was like the man who bore the title of "king's friend" and whose ship was requisitioned many years for public service in port.²³ The king was told, "Though your friend's ship is requisitioned, he has not importuned you concerning the possibility of having it released. But now that the ships of other men are being released, shall not his ship also be released? As much as any other, it deserves to be released." Likewise, when Abraham prayed in behalf of Abimelech and his wife, and all the Philistines conceived and bore children, the angels rose up, complaining: "Master of the universe, all these years Sarah was barren, and Abimelech's wife was barren." (Whence is it known that Abimelech's wife was barren? Because it is said *And God healed Abimelech and his wife* [Gen. 20:17], and no one is ever healed unless he has been previously smitten.) "Now that Abraham has prayed," the angels went on, "Abimelech's wife was remembered; even his maidservants were. These were remembered, but Sarah remains barren. Justice demands that she also be remembered." Well did R. Eliezer teach that wherever Scripture says, *AND the Lord*, the phrase refers not only to the Lord [of mercy], but also to His court [of angels of justice].

And Abraham prayed unto God; and God healed Abimelech,

23. "in port"—Parma MS, and David Luria; PE: "all the time."

and his wife, and his maidservants; and they bore children (*ibid.*). Thereupon, says Scripture, *And the Lord remembered Sarah.*

4. Another comment. R. Judah said: *And the Lord remembered Sarah* (Gen. 21:1)—that is, remembered her with offspring; and *the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken* (*ibid.*)²⁴—that is, filled her breasts with milk. But R. Nehemiah said: *And the Lord remembered Sarah*—that is, remembered her with a son. As for *and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken*, Scripture means that He restored her to her youth. However, R. Simeon ben Lakish said: *And the Lord remembered Sarah*—remembered her with offspring. And she was able to have offspring because *the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken*—since she had no womb, He made her a womb.²⁵

In another comment, the verse is read *And the Lord remembered [others], along with Sarah.*²⁶ R. Judah the son of R. Simon, citing R. Hanin in the name of R. Samuel the son of R. Isaac, said: All barren women everywhere in the world were remembered together with Sarah and were with child at the same time she was; and when she gave birth to a child, all of them gave birth to children at the same time she did. It was for this reason that Sarah said: *God hath given me occasion for laughter; every one that heareth will laugh in joy with me*²⁷ (Gen. 21:6). It is a question, however, whether a person's laughter—Reuben's, say—is necessarily an occasion for someone like Simeon, busy

24. These words, apparently superfluous in the text, will be taken to intimate that extraordinary gifts had been given to Sarah, viz., milk, youth, or a womb.

25. He construes Gen. 11:30 as saying *And Sarai was barren; she had no womb.* See B.Yeb 64b.

26. The particle 't may denote that the noun which follows is the direct object, or may, as in *Noah walked with ('t) God* (Gen. 6:1), have the sense of "with." In this instance the words *And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said*, etc. (Gen. 21:1), construed in the context as superfluous, are read instead *As He had promised, the Lord remembered [others], along with Sarah, when the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken*, etc.

27. JV: *God hath made laughter for me; every one that heareth will laugh on account of me.* Cf. PRKM, p. 468.

in the field with his cutting tool, to laugh with him,²⁸ unless the same good thing has befallen both men. Even so, in saying that all who heard Sarah laugh, laughed with her, Scripture means that barren women everywhere in the world were remembered at the same time she was: *And the Lord remembered [others], along with Sarah.*

And not only this remembrance, but much more besides. When Sarah bore her child, every blind man in the world was given sight; every cripple was made straight; every mute was given speech; and every madman was healed of his madness. What happened may be compared with what a king did for a friend. When an occasion of gladness befell his friend, the king wished to show to what extent his friend was esteemed by him. So he declared a general amnesty and had all prisoners released from confinement. But how can one justify such a broad inference from a text which merely says that *Abraham made a great feast* (Gen. 21:8)? By inference from analogy. The verse *And Abraham made a great feast* is paralleled only once in Scripture by the verse *Then the king—Ahasuerus, that is—made a great feast* (Esther 2:18). And as the king immediately after that great feast, *made a release to the provinces (ibid.)*—that is, released those who were confined in prison—so after Abraham's great feast, it may be inferred that everywhere in the world the Divine King released those who were confined in prisons of madness, blindness, or muteness.

R. Hanina said: There happened something even greater and more remarkable than this release. On the very day on which Isaac was born, the Holy One, blessed be He, intensified the light of the sun's disk forty-eight times over what it usually is, and by so doing intimated the following: Because the world as it now is belongs not to you alone, but to others as well, I hid the original light of creation.²⁹ But when the world which

28. [Literally "However, Reuben is rejoicing, while Simeon is busy wielding his mattock in the field—what is there for Simeon to rejoice about?" This is presumably a popular proverb. L. N.]

29. The light of the seven days of creation, which illuminated the earth before the sun, moon, and stars were made. This light is hid for the righteous, as

will be in keeping with what you are comes into existence, I shall, because of you, restore the original light of creation. *The light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of the seven days [of creation]* (Isa. 30:26). And it will shine because of you: *Because of you that fear My name shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in its wings* (Mal. 3:20).³⁰

5. Another comment: *And the Lord remembered Sarah*. These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *Then all the nations shall know . . . that I the Lord have restored the ruins, and planted that which was desolate; I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it* (Ezek. 36:36). To the governors and the governors' wives who for so long jeered at Sarah, calling her "barren woman," to them Scripture says, *I the Lord have restored the ruins*, Abraham and Sarah who were ruined by the years: "Now Abraham and Sarah were old" (Gen. 18:11). *I planted that which was desolate*—that is, I renewed her youth in Sarah after she asked, "When I am waxed old, can the flush of my youth return?" (Gen. 18:12). *I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it*: "And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said, and the Lord did unto Sarah as He had spoken."

<Another comment:> *And the Lord remembered Sarah*. These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *For though the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the bosom of the earth shall yield no nourishment; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will exult in the God of my salvation* (Hab. 3:17-18). The fig tree in the words *For though*

we are told in the verse *The light is sown for the righteous* (Ps. 97:11). Cf. Piska 23.6.

30. In his n. 58 Friedmann suggests that at Isaac's birth the world's mending began—a mending which, according to R. Samuel ben Isaac, showed itself in that the sterile gave birth and the sick were healed; and also, according to R. Hanina ben Levi, in that the light of the sun was intensified. See Gen. Rabbah 53:8, and cf. Piska 15.22.

the fig tree shall not blossom, etc., stands for Abraham, as we know from the verse that describes the Fathers, "I saw your Fathers as the first-ripe in the fig tree at her first season" (Hos. 9:10). The vine in the words *Neither shall fruit be in the vines* stands for Sarah, as indicated by the verse "Now Abraham and Sarah were old" (Gen. 18:11). *The labor of the olive shall fail*—[that is, the olive no longer yields any oil]—refers to the fact that "it had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women" (*ibid.*). *And the bosom of the earth shall yield no nourishment* implies that Sarah asked "After I am waxed old, can the exuberance of my youth return [and my bosom yield nourishment]?" (Gen. 18:12). *The flock shall be cut off from the folds*—[that is, the aged of the flock can no longer fill the folds with lambs]—implies that Abraham said, "Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old?" (Gen. 17:17). Likewise *And there shall be no herd in the stalls* implies what is said in the verse "And Sarai was barren" (Gen. 11:30). The words *Yet will I rejoice in the Lord* express Abraham's rejoicing: "Through the angels, one of whom said 'Nay, but Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son' (Gen. 17:19), He promised me a son, and what He promised me, He did at once": *And the Lord remembered Sarah*.

6. In another comment, the words are read *Because the Lord was mindful of Sarah*. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Behold, God did not cast away an innocent man; at the same time it was not out of regard for evildoers that He allowed the body to resume its usual ways*³¹ (Job. 8:20). The allusion here is to Abimelech, [who claimed to be innocent in his attempt upon Sarah], and to all his household. [To make sure that the attempt would fail], *The Lord had fast closed up all the openings* (Gen. 20:18) [in Abimelech's body and in the bodies of his household]. The Holy One, blessed be He, closed up even the eyes of all in Abimelech's household,

31. JV: *Behold, God will not cast away an innocent man, neither will He uphold the evildoers.*

so that they were unable to weep any tears, and their ears <ceased> to hear—He did these things not only to all the members of Abimelech's household but also to his flock, to his herd, indeed to all his cattle. [But then Abraham prayed to God on Abimelech's behalf and the Philistines were relieved of the constraint upon the openings of their bodies]. Lest one think that God gave the Philistines relief for the sake of Abraham alone, Scripture says that He did so for Sarah's sake also: *On the word of Sarah Abraham's wife (ibid.)*. "Two are better than one," we are told, "because they have a good reward in the world"³² (Eccl. 4:9). So God healed the Philistines *because the Lord was mindful of Sarah*. Therefore the verse in Job concludes with *At the same time it was not out of regard for evildoers that He allowed the body to resume its usual ways*. This explanation of God's action is borne out by the fact that directly after saying *and God healed Abimelech*, Scripture asserts *because the Lord was mindful of Sarah*.³³

7. Another comment: *And the Lord remembered Sarah*. There are three keys that the Holy One, blessed be He, entrusts to no creature—not to an angel, nor to a seraph, nor even to a troop [of seraphim]—but are kept in His own hand: the key of rain, as is said *The Lord will open unto thee His good treasure the heaven to give the rain of thy Land in its season* (Deut. 28:12); the key of resurrection, *Behold, I will open your graves* (Ezek. 37:12); and the key of the womb, *And the Lord remembered Sarah*. And further, *And God remembered Rachel . . . and opened her womb* (Gen. 30:22).

Another comment: *And the Lord remembered*. These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere, *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy* (Ps. 126:5). Of such was Abraham, who wept and pleaded before the Holy One, blessed be He: *Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed* (Gen.

32. "in the world"—Parma MS, P, and FT; MT and W: "for their labor."

33. I follow Friedmann's interpretation.

15:3). At once he was given good tidings: *In Isaac shall seed be called to thee* (Gen. 21:12). Hence it is said *shall reap in joy*.

8. *And the Lord commanded*³⁴ (Gen. 21:1). According to Scripture, they who receive commands from the Lord are of all kinds. Some are commanded but do not obey; others are commanded and do obey. [God said]: I gave Adam a command, and he did not obey: *But of the tree of knowledge . . . thou shalt not eat of it* (Gen. 2:17); nevertheless, he did eat of it: *Thou . . . hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying: Thou shalt not eat of it* (Gen. 3:17). I commanded the angel of death, and he obeyed; for I decreed upon Adam, *Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return* (Gen. 3:19), and thus it befell him, *And all the days that Adam lived were . . . and he died* (Gen. 5:5). I gave a command to the generation of Enosh, and they did not obey; instead they provoked Me: *Then men began to call themselves by the name of the Lord* (Gen. 4:26).³⁵ Thereupon I gave a command to the Ocean, and it obeyed Him *who called for the waters of the sea, and poured them out* (Amos 5:8).³⁶ I gave a command to the generation of the flood, and they did not obey; instead they said, We do not need worship of Him: *They said unto God: "Depart from us"* (Job 21:14).³⁷ I gave a command to the windows of heaven and to the deep, and they obeyed: *All the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the windows of heaven were opened* (Gen. 7:11). I gave a command to the generation of the Tower of Babel, and they did not obey, but said instead, *Come, let us build us a city* (Gen. 11:4). I gave a command that languages be many, and so they were: *The Lord did there confound the language of all the earth* (Gen. 11:9). I gave a command to the Sodomites, and they did

34. *Pkd* may mean "visit, command, remember."

35. See Piska 5.7, n. 59.

36. At that time the Ocean rose and flooded a third of the world. See [Piska 48.2], and Meq, 2, 240.

37. This passage in Job is taken to describe the generation of the flood. See Meq, 2, 13.

not obey; they persisted in their usual conduct, *Now the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners* (Gen. 13:13). I gave a command to fire and brimstone, and they obeyed: *Then the Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah fire and brimstone*³⁸ (Gen. 19:24). I gave a command to Abraham, and he obeyed: *So Abram went, as the Lord had spoken unto him* (Gen. 12:4). Therefore I gave a command concerning him and concerning the members of his household that reward be given them: *And the Lord commanded concerning Sarah.*

9. Another comment: The root *pkd*, as in the verse *And the Lord remembered*, [has different shades of meaning in different contexts, but always refers to God's providence]: *pkd* in connection with blessing: *And it came to pass from the time that He appointed (pkd) him . . . that the Lord blessed the Egyptian . . . for [Joseph] was a blessing of the Lord upon all that he had* (Gen. 39:5); *pkd* in connection with the gathering of bones: *God will surely remember (pkd) you and ye shall carry up my bones* (Gen. 50:25); *pkd* in the sense of redemption: *I have surely remembered (pkd) you* (Exod. 3:16); *pkd* in connection with inducing belief in God: *And the people believed when they heard that the Lord had remembered (pkd)* (Exod. 4:31); *pkd* in connection with the spirit in man: *Let the Lord the God of the spirits . . . set (pkd)* (Num. 27:16); *pkd* in connection with numbering at God's behest: *These are those that were to be numbered, which Moses and Aaron numbered (pkd)* (Num. 1:44); *pkd* in connection with war: *I have marked (pkd) that which Amalek did* (1 Sam. 15:2); *pkd* in the sense of punishing oppressors: *And I will punish (pkd) all that oppress them* (Jer. 30:20); *pkd* in the sense of punishing [Jews] who have their foreskin restored by surgery: *I will punish (pkd) all them that have the mark of their circumcision removed*³⁹ (Jer. 9:24); *pkd*

38. MT: *brimstone and fire.*

39. JV: *them that are circumcised in their uncircumcision.* But see Yalkuṭ Jer. 285. With regard to the reasons for restoring the foreskin see [Piska 52.1]; and 1 Maccabees 1:15.

in connection with punishing all those who wear garments of linen and wool woven together: *I will punish (p̄kd) the princes . . . and all such as are clothed with foreign apparel* (Zeph. 1:8); *p̄kd* in the sense of punishment of idols: *And I will punish (p̄kd) Bel in Babylon* (Jer. 51:44); *p̄kd* in the sense of punishment of shepherds:⁴⁰ *Mine anger is kindled against the shepherds, and I will punish (p̄kd) the he-goats* (Zech. 10:3); *p̄kd* in connection with the bestowing of abundance: *The Lord had remembered (p̄kd) His people in giving them bread* (Ruth 1:6); *p̄kd* in connection with God's thinking upon salvation: *Remember me, O Lord, when Thou favorest Thy people; O think (p̄kd) of me at Thy salvation* (Ps. 106:4); *p̄kd* in the sense of the providence which preserves life: *Thou hast granted me life and favor, and Thy providence (p̄kd) hath preserved my spirit* (Job 10:12); *p̄kd* in the sense of God's remembering the earth: *Thou hast remembered (p̄kd) the earth, and watered her* (Ps. 65:10); *p̄kd* in the sense of punishment of angels: *The Lord will punish (p̄kd) the host of the high heaven on high* (Isa. 24:21); *p̄kd* in the sense of punishing Leviathan: *The Lord with His sore . . . sword will punish (p̄kd) Leviathan the slant serpent* (Isa. 27:1); *p̄kd* in the sense of punishing nations: *Thou, therefore, O Lord God of hosts, the God of Israel, arouse Thyself to punish (p̄kd) all the nations; show no mercy to any iniquitous traitors. Selah* (Ps. 59:6); and finally *p̄kd* in connection with God's giving of children: *And the Lord remembered Sarah as He had said.*

40. "in the sense of . . . shepherds"—Parma MS. The shepherds and the he-goats are kings and rulers of nations.

PISKA 43

SUMMARY

The Lord's remembering of Hannah

The blessing at the advent of the new moon may be recited up to the fourteenth day in the month. When Israel are careful in regard to the recitation of the blessings, God blesses them with children, as Abraham, Sarah, and Hannah were blessed (Sec. 1).

The calling upon God's name must come, however, from the heart. Only then does God grant the requests of the man who prays to Him. Thus in response to his heartfelt prayer, David was told by God the location of the Temple as well as its layout and dimensions; and Hannah, in her turn, was granted the blessing of children (Sec. 2). Hannah's prayer rose from her heart with unusual force. In addressing God as the *Lord of hosts* (1 Sam. 1:11), an appellation not hitherto used in Scripture, Hannah implied that the host in heaven do not procreate and bear children, but that the host on earth do, and hence the Lord should grant her wish for a child.

According to further comment, she was even more forceful in her entreaty. She threatened God that if He would not remember her with a child, she would make it appear that she was a wanton. Then, having been made to drink the bitter water of the test given to women suspected of infidelity, she would be cleared of the charge. Thereupon God would be obliged to give her a son, in keeping with the promise in the Torah that a woman so cleared of suspicion of infidelity would conceive children. Furthermore, Hannah reminded God that she had faithfully observed the three precepts which women are required to observe—the first in regard to menstruation, the second in regard to the priest's share of the dough, and the third in regard to the kindling of the Sabbath lamp. And she did not hesitate to ask Him for both male and female children (Sec. 3).

God's remembering of Hannah suggests to the commentator the subject of other women who had suffered barrenness and whom God compensated. When Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the nations of the earth said: "He is really the son of her maidservant, and she makes believe that she is suckling him." And so, at the urging of Abraham, she uncovered herself and showed her two nipples pouring out milk. Thereupon the nations of the earth brought their children to Sarah to give them suck. Some of these children became converts, and others achieved great distinction in the world. Indeed, all Gentiles throughout the world who accept conversion and all Gentiles throughout the world who fear God spring from the children who drank of the milk of Sarah. Jochebed, the wife of Amram, was also barren for a while as a result of the Israelites' attempt to escape the persecution of the Egyptians, but then she became the mother of Moses. Finally, God compensated Miriam the daughter of Tanhum, who was left barren because her seven children were slain during the persecution under Hadrian, by having her rejoice the more in her children in the time-to-come (Sec. 4).

That Sarah was made to wait for a child twenty-five years, Rebekah twenty years, and Hannah nineteen years, shows that God tries the righteous according to their strength (Sec. 5). And He requites them as they deserve. He requited Hannah even as He requited Abraham and Sarah. By proselyting, Abraham and Sarah brought children of men to become His children and were requited with children. Hannah, when she was barren, urged her husband to bring into the house another wife who would bring children into the world, and so Hannah was requited with children (Sec. 6). In her song Hannah speaks of having given birth to seven children, while Scripture records that in addition to Samuel she gave birth to five children. The apparent discrepancy is resolved by the commentators in a number of ways (Sec. 7).

Opinions differ as to whether Peninnah, Elkanah's second wife, vexed Hannah out of spitefulness, or whether she meant to make her fret so that Hannah would "thunder" against God in prayer for children. Indeed, as thunder is followed by the blessing of rain, so Hannah's prayer was followed by the blessing of children (Sec. 8).

*So the Lord remembered Hannah,
and she conceived, and bore three sons
and two daughters (1 Sam. 2:21).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: How far into the month may the blessing for the new moon's advent be recited? Our Masters taught us: According to R. Aḥa citing R. Assi, up to the day the moon's crescent has rounded to the full—that is, up to the fourteenth day in the month; all during this period, while the moon is still waxing, the blessing spoken at the occasion of the new moon's advent may be recited.²

The Holy One, blessed be He, says: Take care to recite to Me the proper blessing for every occasion. If you are careful with regard to such blessings, I will come to you and bless you in return, as is said *In every place where I ordain to have My name remembered, I will come to thee and bless thee* (Exod. 20:21). Consider Abraham: what is said of him? *Because Abraham hearkened to Me [in the matter of blessings and spoke] in a voice [that held blessing]*³ (Gen. 26:5), I blessed him: *And the Lord had blessed Abraham because of all [the blessings he spoke]* (Gen. 24:1). Nay more. In his star Abraham saw it written that he would have no children, as is said *Seeing I go hence childless* (Gen. 15:2). But the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Thou didst indeed read the stars correctly, for as thou livest, Abram, as Abram, is not destined to beget children. What then do I mean to do for thee? I will change thy name and thou

1. 1 Sam. 1:1–2:10 is the haftarah on the first day of New Year. See B.Meḡ 31a. In his n. 1 Friedmann suggests that in ancient times 1 Sam. 2:1–21 may have been the haftarah.

2. See P.Ber 9:3,13d; B.Sanh 41b–42a; and JE, 9, 244. Parma MS: "Our Masters taught us: Up to the day the moon's crescent has rounded to the full, which is to say until the fourteenth day in the month. R. Jacob the son of R. Aḥa taught in the name of R. Jose: Up to the day the moon appears like the half of a flat-cake. R. Jose the son of R. Abba in the name of R. Abba said: The rule is that until the fourteenth day in the month, as long as the moon is still waxing, the blessing at the occasion of the new moon's advent may be recited."

3. Since he obeyed all commandments, it is assumed that he recited the appropriate blessings. See MTeh 1:13. JV: *hearkened to My voice*.

wilt beget, as is said *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham* (Gen. 17:5). Sarai also, as Sarai, is not destined to bear children, as is said *Sarai was barren* (Gen. 11:30); but as Sarah she will bear children, as is said *The Lord remembered Sarah* (Gen. 21:1). And Hannah was also remembered because she was constantly going up and praying in the Sanctuary and pleading before the Holy One, blessed be He; He heard her prayer and remembered her. And the proof? It is to be found in the lesson for the day: *So the Lord remembered Hannah*.

2. <*So the Lord remembered*, etc.> R. Tanhuma bar Abba began his discourse as follows: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him in truth. He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him; He also will hear their cry, and will save them* (Ps. 145:18-19). Though the verse begins, *The Lord is nigh to all that call upon Him*, it concludes with *to all that call upon Him in truth*. Though a verse in another Psalm begins, *Surely God is good to Israel* (Ps. 73:1), it concludes with *only to such as are pure in heart*. Though a verse in Lamentations begins, *The Lord is good* (Lam. 3:25), it concludes with [only] *to the soul that seeketh Him*. Though a verse in still another Psalm begins, *Happy is the man whose strength is in Thee* (Ps. 84:6), it concludes with *in whose heart are the high-ways [to Torah]*.⁴

He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him (Ps. 145:19). Because the Holy One, blessed be He, does not wish to bring frustration to the spirit of righteous men when they pray to Him, the Holy One, blessed be He, grants what they request of Him. Who was one whose prayer the Holy One, blessed be He, heeded and to whom He gave all that he asked? David, who according to Scripture said of himself: ⁵ *I am a companion of all them that*

4. The parallel in Lev. Rabbah 17:1 reads: "in whose hearts the ways to Torah are well trodden."

5. "Because the Holy One . . . said of himself"—Parma MS; PE: "Why? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, not disallowing the prayer of such a one, grants what he requests of Him. Such was David, who said of himself."

fear Thee (Ps. 119:63). What David had in mind in saying this was the time he was distressed about the site of the Temple, as is written *Lord, remember unto David all his affliction . . . Surely I will not come into the tent of my house . . . I will not give sleep to mine eyes . . . until I find out a place for the Lord, a dwelling place for the Mighty One of Jacob* (Ps. 132:1-5). When the Holy One, blessed be He, saw David in continuing distress on account of the Temple, at once He sent to him the prophet Gad who showed him the site for the Temple, as is written *Gad came that day to David, and said unto him: "Go up, and rear an altar unto the Lord in the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite"* (2 Sam. 24:18). David went at once. Of this it is written *David went up according to the saying of Gad, as the Lord commanded, etc.* (2 Sam. 24:19). And there he found the altar to which Adam had brought offerings—Noah also had brought offerings to it, Abraham also had brought offerings to it. As soon as David found the place, he began measuring it, saying, "From here to there will be the Temple Court, from here to there will be the Holy of Holies," as is written *Then David said, This is the House of the Lord God* (1 Chron. 22:1), [according to the measurements that he then made]. And from what point were the measurements made? From the point that Scripture identifies as the ancient altar[⁶'s site], saying *This is the altar of burnt offering* (*ibid.*).

It is thus shown that the Holy One, blessed be He, does not frustrate the spirit of the righteous by withholding the reward due them: He⁶ grants them whatever they desire, in keeping with the verse *He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him*.

To whom else was granted what she desired? To Hannah, who prayed before the Holy One, blessed be He; at the conclusion of her prayer, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not let her go forth empty-handed. For the Holy One, blessed be He, heard her prayer and granted her all that she asked of Him.

6. "frustrate the spirit . . . He"—Parma MS; PE: "disallow the wishes of the righteous, but," etc.

3. *She vowed a vow, and said: "O Lord of hosts"* (1 Sam. 1:11). What is implied by the apostrophe *O Lord of hosts*, [an apostrophe not hitherto used in Scripture]? According to R. Judah the son of R. Simon, Hannah said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, there is a host above, and there is a host below. The host above do not eat, nor drink, nor procreate, nor die, but they live for ever; and the host below eat, and drink, and procreate, and die. Now I do not know of what host I am, whether I am of the one above or the one below. If I am of the host above, I should not be eating, nor drinking, nor possibly bearing children, nor dying, for I should live for ever, just as the host above live for ever. But if I am of the host below, then not only should I be eating and drinking, but I should be bearing children and eventually dying, even as the host below eat, and drink, and procreate, and die.⁷ Hannah's implication in the apostrophe *O Lord of hosts* was that since she was of the host below, the Lord should grant her wish for a child.

Another comment: *O Lord of hosts*. R. Judah the son of R. Simon said: On festal pilgrimages, when Hannah went up to the Sanctuary, she would see all Israel gathered there. She then said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, Thou hast all these hosts, but among them not even one is mine. *If seeing Thou wilt see*⁸ *the affliction of Thy handmaid (ibid.)*. If *seeing*, good; but if not, *Thou wilt see* even against Thy will. She said: It is better that Thou seest what pleases Thee rather than that Thou see what pleases Thee not. Hence, she went on to say, If Thou wilt not remember me, I will go and make it appear that I had secluded myself with another man; my husband will see me, suspect me of infidelity, take me to a priest, and have me drink the bitter water of the test given to women suspected of infidelity.⁹ I will be found undefiled, and then Thou

7. "and die"—Parma MS.

8. JV: *If Thou wilt indeed look on*. But apparently the infinitive absolute *r'h* is taken as part of a protasis, the apodosis of which is missing; the finite verb *Thou wilt see* is thus left free to indicate another act.

9. See Num. 5.

wilt be obliged to remember me and give me a son, since in the Torah Thou didst cause it to be written *If the woman be not defiled . . . then she shall be cleared, and shall conceive seed* (Num. 5:28). Hence the words *If seeing Thou wilt see* mean: See what will please Thee; else Thou wilt have to see that which pleases Thee not.

Remember me, and not forget Thy handmaid (I Sam. 1:11). R. Samuel bar Nahman said: In this verse *Thy handmaid* is written three times, to correspond to the three precepts which, according to our Masters, women are required to observe—the first in regard to menstruation; the second in regard to the priest's share of the dough; and the third in regard to the kindling of the Sabbath lamp.¹⁰ Hannah said: Was not Thy handmaid strict in observing all three of these?

What is implied by the root *zkr* in the expression *remember me* (*zkrtny*)? [Re-MEN-ber]—remember me with men children (*zkr*). And what is implied by *and not forget Thy handmaid*? And also do not forget the female children. Hence it is written *So the Lord remembered Hannah, and she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters*.

4. Another comment: *So the Lord remembered Hannah*, etc. These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *The Lord our God . . . causeth a woman to dwell barren in her house in order to make her the joyful mother of children* (Ps. 113:9). The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I had Sarah dwell as a barren woman in her house, as is said *Sarai was barren* (Gen. 11:30), in order to make her rejoice the more in children. But did Sarah have more than one child? Did she not give birth to Isaac only, as is written *Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age* (Gen. 21:2)? What then is meant by referring to her as *a joyful mother of children*? The answer is this: At the time that Sarah gave birth to Isaac, the nations of the earth said, "He is really the son of her maidservant, and she makes believe that she is suckling him." In instant

10. See B.Ber 31b.

reply to them Abraham said to Sarah: "Sarah, don't just stand there! This is not a time for modesty. For the hallowing of the Name arise and uncover yourself." Sarah arose and uncovered herself, and her two nipples were pouring out milk like two jets of water, as is written *And she said: "Who would have said (mll) unto Abraham that Sarah would give children suck?"* (Gen. 21:7). According to R. Phinehas the Priest ben Hama, quoting R. Hilkiyah, the word *mll*, usually read *said*, is here to be read *ripe ears*, and the verse therefore refers to Abraham's virility: the standing crop of Abraham was dried up, but now it became full of ripe ears (*mlylh*) again. Hence the verse as a whole is to be read: *Who would have attributed to Abraham the virility to produce ripe ears with the result that Sarah would give children suck?* At sight of Sarah's milk the nations of the earth brought their children to Sarah to give them suck, thus confirming the truth of the statement that *Sarah would give children suck*. Now some of them in all sincerity brought their children for Sarah to give them suck, some brought their children only to check up on her. Neither the former nor the latter suffered any loss. According to R. Levi, those who were brought in sincerity became proselytes. In regard to these Scripture says, *Sarah would give children suck*. How is the expression *give children suck* to be interpreted? That these children of the nations of the earth became children of Israel. And according to our Masters, those children who were brought to check up on Sarah achieved distinction in the world through promotion to great office. Accordingly, all Gentiles throughout the world who accept conversion and all Gentiles throughout the world who fear God¹¹ spring from the children who drank of the milk of Sarah. Hence Sarah is alluded to as *a joyful mother of children*.

In another comment, the verse in the Psalm is read *The Lord our God . . . causeth a woman rooted out [of her home] and*

11. On the distinction between "the righteous proselytes" and "the Gentiles who fear God" see Moore, *Judaism*, 1, 325 ff. See also Bernard J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* (Cincinnati, 1939); and William G. Braude, *Jewish Proselyting* (Providence, 1940).

thereby made barren¹² to dwell again in her house. R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman: The allusion is to Jochebed. Jochebed barren? Behold, she gave birth to Aaron and Miriam! She was barren for a time, however, for you find that when Pharaoh decreed *Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river* (Exod. 1:22), as soon as Amram heard this—he and his court as well¹³—he at once ordered the Israelites to withhold from procreation. So they divorced their wives—*The women of my people ye cast out from their pleasant houses* (Micah 2:9)—and therefore Scripture calls Jochebed a barren woman because she was made barren by being rooted out of her house.

At that time Miriam was six years old, and she said: "Father, father, Pharaoh is kinder to Israel than you are." Why? "Pharaoh has decreed against male children; but you have decreed against both male and female children. Though Pharaoh has decreed, it is doubtful whether his decree is being carried out or not. But you have decreed, and your decree is being carried out." When Amram heard what she had to say, he brought her before the Sanhedrin and she said the same thing to them. The Sanhedrin then told him: "Amram, it was you who forbade procreation—it is up to you to declare it permitted." He replied: "And what say you if I set the example by secretly bringing back my own wife?" They asked: "But how can it be made known to all of Israel?" According to R. Judah bar Zebida, Amram's answer was to place Jochebed in a bridal litter, with Aaron on one side and Miriam on the other carrying castanets and marching before her. And the holy spirit cried out and said, *The Lord our God . . . causeth a woman rooted out [of her house] and thereby made barren to dwell again in her house as a joyful mother of children*. Why did Amram make this public display? In order that Israel should see what he was doing and so bring back their own wives.

And when they saw, they sang a song to the Holy One, blessed be He. And why did they sing a song? Because¹⁴ they said:

12. The root *ḥr* means "root out, drive out," and also "being barren."

13. He was head of the Sanhedrin. See Piska 15:7; and Exod. Rabbah 1:13.

14. "And why did . . . Because"—Parma MS; PE might be read: "They did not sing a song [for what had already taken place]. But," etc.

Now Moses the redeemer will be born, and we shall be redeemed from Egypt: *Hallelujah . . . For Israel is about to come forth out of Egypt* (Ps. 113:9; 114:1).

Another comment: *The Lord our God . . . causeth a woman to dwell barren in her house.* The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I made Miriam the daughter of Tanhum become childless like a barren woman in order to make her rejoice the more in her children in the time-to-come. Our Masters taught: During the days of [Hadrian's] persecution this is what happened to Miriam the daughter of Tanhum who had seven children: Hadrian's men seized the first child and said to him, "Come and bow down to the idol." He replied: "I shall not deny God." Thereupon they took hold of him and put him in a gridiron and roasted him alive. They seized the second child, and said to Him, "Come and bow down to the idol." He replied, "I shall not deny the Holy One, blessed be He." Thereupon they did to him what they had done to the first. So with the third, and the fourth, and all the others, until there remained only the youngest child. They said, "Come and bow down to the idol; if you do not, we shall do to you what we have done to your brothers." He replied, "May I go and take counsel of my mother?" He went to his mother and asked her, "What say you? Shall I bow down to the idol or not?" His mother replied: "O my son, do you wish that in the time-to-come all your brothers be put in the bosom of Abraham¹⁵ while you are in the bosom of Esau? I beg you, do not listen to Hadrian's men."¹⁶ At once he went forward and refused to bow down to the idol. Thereupon they took him and did to him exactly what they had done to his brothers. Then they took Miriam, the mother, and slew her as well.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: In the time-to-come I will cause her to rejoice the more in her children, *a joyful mother of children.*

Another comment: *The Lord our God . . . causeth a woman*

15. Cf. Luke 16:22.

16. "while you are in the bosom of Esau . . . do not listen to Hadrian's men"—Parma MS.

to dwell barren in her house. These words refer to Hannah, of whom it is written *Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children* (1 Sam. 1:2). At first she was barren in the household in order to make her rejoice the more in the children she eventually bore—a *joyful mother of children* (Ps. 113:9). *So the Lord remembered Hannah, and she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters.*

Hannah said to God: What ought I do in my joy? I ought to sing Thee songs and Psalms—Hallelujah:¹⁷ *And Hannah prayed, and said: My heart exulteth in the Lord, my horn is exalted in the Lord* (1 Sam. 2:1).

5. Another comment: *So the Lord remembered Hannah.* These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *The refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold; and a man is tried according to his praise* (Prov. 27:21). What is meant by *the refining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold*? It means that even as the refiner puts silver into the fire and gold into the furnace, but does not keep them in the fire or in the furnace beyond the time necessary to refine them, so also does the Holy One, blessed be He, refine the righteous, each one of them, according to their strength.¹⁸ Hence the refining pot is reserved for the trying of silver and the furnace for the trying of gold. What then is meant by the words that follow: *and a man is tried according to his praise*? The Holy One, blessed be He, tries the righteous man according to what his praiseworthy deeds¹⁹ have proved him to be. You find that it was so with Sarah. For twenty-five years, from the time she came to the Land of Israel, the Holy One, blessed be He, tried her. It is written that *Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran* (Gen. 12:4), and Sarah at that time sixty-five years old,

17. With Friedmann I delete the words *When Israel came forth out of Egypt* (Ps. 114:1), which follow in Parma MS and P.

18. "according to their strength," as in Parma MS; PE: "according to the honor which is his." See Rashi.

19. A play on the words *mhlw*, "his praise," and *m'llw*, "his deeds," is probably intended.

he older than she by ten years. At the age of ninety she gave birth to a child, Abraham being a hundred years old when Isaac was born, Isaac who was the answer to his question *Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?* (Gen. 17:17). Thus you find that the Holy One, blessed be He, tried her according to HER strength. And Rebekah also—the Holy One, blessed be He, tried her according to HER strength—tried her for twenty years. And the proof? It is written *Isaac was forty years old when he took Rebekah, the daughter of Bethuel* (Gen. 25:20); *And Isaac was threescore years old when she bore [Jacob and Esau]* (Gen. 25:26). Thus you find that the Holy One, blessed be He, tried her for twenty years. And Hannah—her also the Holy One, blessed be He, tried according to HER strength. And how long did He try her? Nineteen years, according to our Masters. And how did they arrive at this figure? To begin with, there were the ten years that she lived with Elkanah when she did not bear any children; then he took Peninnah who bore him ten sons, as we know from Elkanah's saying to Hannah, *Am I not better to thee than ten sons?* (1 Sam. 1:8), the reference being to his sons by Peninnah. Now if you allow eight years for the times Peninnah was pregnant, and allow one year for the time Hannah was pregnant with Samuel, you have a total of nineteen years that God tried Hannah. And after that He remembered her. *So the Lord remembered Hannah.*

6. <In another comment, the words are read *So the Lord requited Hannah's trust in kind*>,²⁰ for, as R. Aḥa said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: As trustee, I act honorably: whatever a man deposits with Me, I return to him. With what kind of action may God's be compared? With the action of one who is a trustee, one with whom people leave things in deposit. One man comes and de-

20. Apparently the commentator, puzzled by the seeming implication that God remembers, as though He could forget, or that God visited, as though He were a body, takes the word *pkd* as "requite, deposit," or "entrust."

posits gold coins; another comes and deposits thorns. Then they come to get them back from him. He who deposits money with him, to him the trustee returns money; he who deposits thorns with him, to him the trustee gives back thorns. So the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I act as trustee. Whatever a man deposits with Me, I return to him. Thus it was with Abraham. You find that he deposited souls with the Holy One, blessed be He, as is written *Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, etc., and the souls that they had made in Haran* (Gen. 12:5). But did Abraham make souls? R. Eleazar ben Pedat replied in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra: If all the inhabitants of the world should undertake to create a single gnat they would be unable to do so, therefore how can you speak of *the souls that they had made in Haran*? Is it conceivable that Abraham and Sarah created souls? If not, then what is meant by *souls that they had made*? What is meant is that Abraham converted men to faith in the one God, and Sarah converted women. By the making of souls is meant the act of conversion as referred to in the verse *And so I saw the wicked who deserve to be buried, but then they came [into the congregation of the Lord]* ²¹ (Eccles. 8:10). It was by their conversion of men and women that Abraham and Sarah are said to have created souls—brought them in under the wings of the Presence.

Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said: As ye live, you deposited souls with Me; I will requite your trust in kind: *And the Lord requited Sarah's trust in kind . . . And Sarah conceived, and bore Abraham a son in his old age* (Gen. 21:1-2).

Amalek, however, came and deposited thorns with Him, as is said *Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim* (Exod. 17:8); *He met thee by the way, and smote the hindermost of thee* (Deut. 25:18). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Amalek: Thou didst deposit thorns with Me. As thou livest, I shall requite thee with thorns: *Thus saith the Lord . . . I will requite Amalek in kind for what he did to Israel . . . Now go and smite Amalek* (1 Sam. 15:2, 3).

21. See Eccles. Rabbah and Rashi.

As we shall shortly see, Hannah also deposited souls with the Holy One, blessed be He. To begin with, her husband is described in Scripture as *A certain man of Ramathaim-zophim, [a seer]*²² . . . *and his name was Elkanah, the son of Jeroham, the son of Elihu, the son of Tohu* (1 Sam. 1:1). [Furthermore, Elkanah was of distinguished lineage], for, according to R. Johanan, Tohu, the name his ancestor is here known by, is a cipher for Tohu's real name, which was Asaph, [Asaph being one of the sons of Korah].²³ The method of ciphering is known as *Atbash*:²⁴ the first letter of Tohu (*Tḥw*), *taw*, becomes an '*alef*', the first letter of Asaph; in succession, the *ḥet* of Tohu becomes the *samek* of Asaph; and the *waw* of Tohu becomes the *pe* of Asaph. And yet, said R. Jonah in the name of R. Isaac,²⁵ disparagingly the text goes on to say, despite Elkanah's merit, *And he had two wives* (1 Sam. 1:2). And why did he take two wives? [At the urging of Hannah who was his first wife]. *Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children (ibid.)*. When Hannah has seen that she could bear no children, she said, "I will tell him to bring a rival to me into my house. And thereupon, when the Holy One, blessed be He, sees that I had a rival to myself brought into my house, [a rival who has brought souls into the world], He will requite me." The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Indeed as thou livest, Hannah, thou didst cause souls to be deposited with Me, and I shall pay thee back in kind: *So the Lord requited Hannah in kind*.

22. Ramathaim-zophim is a place name, but here the commentator apparently construes "Ramathaim" as *mathaim*, "two hundred," and "zophim," "seers," so that Elkanah is regarded as one of the two hundred seers of his time. See B.Meḡ 14a.

23. Asaph was a Levite and a Psalmist. See MTeh 1:6. According to 1 Sam. 1:1, Elkanah and Samuel his son appear to be Ephraimites, but 1 Chron. 6:8 attributes Levitical descent to Elkanah, thereby justifying Samuel's ministry in the Sanctuary. R. Johanan's exegesis is thus an attempt to reconcile the inconsistency between Samuel and Chronicles with regard to Elkanah's genealogy.

24. A method of interchanging the first letter of the alphabet with the last, the second with the last but one, the third from the beginning with the third from the end, etc. See Jastrow, 131b.

25. "R. Jonah said in the name of R. Isaac"—Parma MS; P: "Rabbi said in the name of Rabbi."

7. *And she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters* (1 Sam. 2:21)—five children in all. But in her song we find Hannah saying of herself that she had given birth to seven children. The statement is found in the verse that begins *They that were full of bread now seek to be hired* (1 Sam. 2:5). What is meant by *now seek to be hired*? That they now hire themselves out to earn their bread. The verse goes on: *But they that were hungry have ceased*—ceased being hungry. Then the verse speaks of the change in Hannah's fortune: *While the barren hath borne seven*—that is, Hannah who had been barren; and the verse concludes with a reference to the change in Peninnah's fortune: *She that had many children hath languished*. But if, according to Scripture, Hannah bore five children, how is it that she said of herself that she *hath borne seven*? R. Judah, R. Nehemiah, and the Rabbis differed in their explanations. R. Judah said: Hannah bore five children; but she speaks of having seven because five were born after Samuel, and Samuel himself was regarded as equal to two—that is, to Moses and Aaron, as is said *Moses and Aaron among His priests: Samuel among them that call upon His name* (Ps. 99:6). R. Nehemiah said that besides Samuel she gave birth to five other children, but that she speaks of having seven more because she lived to see Samuel's two sons—*The name of his first-born, Joel; the name of his second, Abijah* (1 Sam. 8:2)—and the children of one's children are like one's own. Hence it is said *While the barren hath borne seven*. The Rabbis agreed that she bore no more than five [besides Samuel, but they accounted in a different way for the additional two she speaks of]. We find them setting forth their argument towards the conclusion of their exposition of the following passage: *And it came to pass upon a day, when Elkanah sacrificed, that he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and daughters, portions; but unto Hannah he gave a portion 'pym* (1 Sam. 1:4-5)—that is, with a loving look.²⁶ Another explanation: What is meant by *'pym*? Before all people present.²⁷ Another explanation: Elkanah

26. *'pym*, the dual form of *'f* (the Hebrew letter for both "p" and "f" is the same), "face," is thus taken to mean "with intense expression in the face."

27. The dual form of "face" is now taken in the plural sense.

gave her the best-looking of the portions. Another explanation of 'pym: he gave Hannah a double portion. Why? *He loved Hannah, but the Lord had shut up her womb* (*ibid.*). Now Peninnah used to vex her, and Hannah would weep and not eat, as is written in the verse *And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the House of the Lord, so she vexed her; therefore she wept, and would not eat* (1 Sam. 1:7). *And Elkanah her husband said unto her: . . . Why weepest thou?* (1 Sam. 1:8), by which he meant: Sarah who was barren, did she sit thus and weep the whole day? Rebekah who was barren, did she act thus? *Why is thy heart grieved?* (*ibid.*), by which he meant: Rachel who was barren, did she sit thus by herself? *Am I not better to thee than ten sons?* (*ibid.*). Here Elkanah was alluding to the ten heads of successive generations, such as are listed in the verse *Now these are the generations of Perez: Perez begat Hezron, etc.* (Ruth 4:18)—ten in all.²⁸

Another comment, [one that sets forth the Rabbis' argument]: *Am I not better to thee than ten sons*, they argue, may also be an allusion to the ten sons of Peninnah. As things eventually turned out, when God came to remember Hannah, whenever Hannah gave birth to a child, Peninnah would be burying two of her children. By the time Hannah had given birth to four, Peninnah had buried eight. Hence when Hannah was pregnant with her fifth child, Peninnah was afraid that she would have to bury the two children that remained to her. What did Peninnah do? She went and besought Hannah, saying to her: "I beseech you, humbling myself before you. I know that I have sinned against you. But be more forbearing than I deserve, so that the two children who remain to me will stay alive." Thereupon Hannah prayed before the Holy One, blessed be He, saying to Him: "Be forbearing towards her in regard to her two children and let them stay alive." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to her: "As thou livest, they were destined to die, but since thou hast prayed in their behalf that they stay alive, I shall call them by thy name

28. Elkanah's prophetic remark thus intimated that she would have a son who would be more worthy than the ten generations taken together that are mentioned in the Book of Ruth.

and consider them as being thine." Therefore, in saying *While the barren hath borne seven*, Scripture is implying that Peninnah's two remaining children were accounted as though they were Hannah's.

8. Another comment: *So the Lord remembered Hannah* (1 Sam. 2:21). What is said in the passage preceding this statement? *And her rival vexed her sore* (1 Sam. 1:6). Peninnah would vex Hannah with one provocation after another. What would Peninnah do? According to R. Nahman bar Abba, Peninnah would get up early and say to Hannah: "Why don't you rouse yourself and wash your children's faces, so they are fit to go to their schoolmaster?" And at twelve o'clock,²⁹ she would say: "Why don't you rouse yourself and welcome your children who are about to return from school?" Such is the provocation referred to in the words *And her rival vexed her sore*.

R. Tanhuma bar Abba said: When they sat down to eat, Elkanah would give each of his children his proper portion. But what would Peninnah do? Intending to vex Hannah [by calling attention to the fact that Hannah was childless], she would say to Elkanah: "Give this son of mine his portion! To this son of mine you have not yet given his portion!" Why did Peninnah speak thus? *To make her fret (hr'mh) (ibid.)*.

In another comment, the word *hr'mh* is read not "to make her fret" but *to make her thunder* against God in prayer on her own behalf. Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Peninnah: "Thou makest her 'thunder' against Me. As thou livest, there are no thunders that are not followed by rain. I shall remember her at once." *So the Lord remembered Hannah, and she conceived, and bore three sons and two daughters* (1 Sam. 2:21).

29. Literally "the sixth hour."

SUMMARY

The power of repentance

One who keeps committing sins while saying that he will repent later, and then surely be forgiven, will never have strength enough to repent. God delights in true repentance, since it makes it unnecessary for Him to impose His measure of justice (Sec. 1). Unlike man, God will retract or commute a stern verdict for only a trifle, merely one word of repentance (Sec. 2).

In praying for famine for Israel (1 Kings 17:1) or for a *mis-carrying womb* (Hos. 9:14), Elijah and Hosea were not merciless, for they were seeking to have Israel punished in ways which would be more bearable than the punishments God would otherwise inflict (Sec. 3). Hosea's skill in pleading for repentance was extraordinary (Sec. 4). Because he thought of Israel not as one who had fallen beyond saving, but as one who had stumbled in the way, he taught Israel what to say in repentance (Sec. 5).

Israel's repentance moves God to annul His own edicts (Sec. 6). He esteems repentance so highly that of the seven things He made before the creation of the earth, the only one He swears by is repentance. Indeed, even though God had to take Himself far away in consequence of Israel's wickedness, He is ready to return even before Israel has turned back towards Him; He does not count against the penitent sinner even the greatest sins he formerly committed (Sec. 7).

In the afterlife the righteous are rewarded with peace, but the wicked who die without repenting will have their souls blasted in despair (Sec. 8).

Repentance is one of five things which bring redemption. God goes out of His way to receive the penitent. So, go to God, says Hosea, while He still abides in the palace of His mercy. You may go to Him with no more than words, and find yourself returning loaded with gifts. Repentance soars straight up to God. Even if the

heap of a man's iniquities reaches all the way up to God, return to God is still possible (Sec. 9). At Israel's request, God Himself will attest to Israel's repentance, and their sins He will cast into the sea (Sec. 10).

*Return, O Israel, unto the Lord
thy God; for thou hast stumbled in thine
iniquity (Hos. 14:2).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: If one who keeps committing sins keeps saying that through repentance he will be forgiven—what answer should be made to him? Our Masters taught thus: "He who keeps saying, 'I will sin, and then repent; I will sin, and then repent,' will never have strength enough to repent" (Yoma 8:8). Why not? Because if a man repents but then goes back to his transgressions, his repentance was not true repentance. When a man goes down to the ritual bath with a reptile in his hand, he can make no claim to true purification. What ought he do? He should first throw away what is in his hand; then let him go down into the ritual bath, and he will be truly pure. Scripture says, *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the man of iniquity his thoughts; and let him return repentant unto the Lord, and He will have compassion upon him* (Isa. 55:7). For the Holy One, blessed be He, takes pleasure in repentance; He takes no pleasure in slaying any creature, [even a wicked one], as is said *I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezek. 33:11). The Holy One, blessed be He, cries out, so to speak, to the wicked for repentance, so that they may stay alive. Thus to Israel He cries out: *Return, ye backsliding children* (Jer. 3:22). Repent before I find it necessary to fall back upon the measure of justice and then inflict I know not what punishment upon you. But while I stand upon the measure of mercy, repent, and I will receive

1. Hos. 14:2-10 is the haftarah for the Sabbath between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement.

you. And the proof that God speaks thus? The words *unto the Lord thy God* in the haftarah, which can be construed *while*^{1a} *thy God [of justice] is yet the Lord [of mercy]*.

2. *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God*. R. Tanhuma bar Abba began his discourse as follows: *For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways* (Isa. 55:8). The way of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not at all like the way of flesh-and-blood. The way of flesh-and-blood is to kindle a lamp from another lamp; flesh-and-blood is not able to kindle light out of darkness. On the other hand, when the Holy One, blessed be He—may His name be blessed—began to create His world, all was darkness, waste, and desolation, yet out of darkness He brought forth light, as is said *And the earth was waste and desolation, and darkness was upon the face of the deep* (Gen. 1:2). What follows in the text? *God said: "Let there be light." And there was light* (Gen. 1:3). Again, flesh-and-blood, after uttering a verdict, cannot retract. On the other hand, the Holy One, blessed be He, after uttering a verdict, can retract. For example, it is said *Sāmāria shall bear her guilt, for she hath rebelled against her God* (Hos. 14:1), but what follows directly? The retraction: *Return, O Israel*. Indeed you cannot name a single prophet who after chastising Israel did not retract his words and provide Israel with a poultice to heal the wounds he had inflicted. Each and every wound there was, the prophet came back and sought to heal it. Hosea said, *I will no more have compassion upon Israel* (Hos. 1:6), but then, retracting, said, *And I will have compassion upon her that had not obtained compassion* (Hos. 2:25). The very mouth which uttered the words *For ye are not My people* (Hos. 1:9), withdrew them even as it brought healing with the words *I will say to them that were not My people: "Thou art My people"* (Hos. 2:25). The very mouth which uttered the words *For she is not My wife* (Hos. 2:4), withdrew them even as it brought healing with the words *thou shalt call Me, my Husband* (Hos. 2:18). The very mouth which uttered

1a. By a slight change in vowels, 'ad, "unto," can be read 'od, "while."

the words *And make her as a wilderness* (Hos. 2:5), withdrew them even as it brought healing with the words *I . . . will bring her into the wilderness . . . and give her her vineyards from thence* (Hos. 2:16-17). The very mouth which uttered the words *They speak words, they swear falsely, they make covenants; thus judgment springeth up as hemlock in the furrows of the field* (Hos. 10:4), withdrew them even as it brought healing with the words *Take with you words and turn to the Lord* (Hos. 14:3). The very mouth which uttered the words *For Israel is stubborn like a stubborn heifer* (Hos. 4:16), withdrew them even as it brought healing with the words *So will we render for bullocks the offering of our lips* (Hos. 14:3). The very mouth which uttered the words *But they have not returned unto the Lord their God* (Hos. 7:10), withdrew them even as it brought healing with the words *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God*.

Another comment: *Return, O Israel*. The way of the Holy One, blessed be He, is not at all like the way of flesh-and-blood. The way of flesh-and-blood is to set down a harsh verdict and then commute it in consideration of receipt of a great sum of money. But the Holy One, blessed be He, sets down a harsh verdict and then commutes it in consideration of receipt of a mere trifle. And what is the trifle? A word, as is said *Take with you words and turn to the Lord* (Hos. 14:3). For example, of God's way of doing things is it not said in the passage preceding these words [*His verdict on*] *the iniquity of Ephraim is bound up* (Hos. 13:12); and is it not also said *Samaria shall bear her guilt, for she hath rebelled against her God* (Hos. 14:1)? Nevertheless, despite all such verdicts, God says to Israel: Turn in repentance, and I shall commute every single one of them.

3. Another comment: *Return, O Israel*. It is said of the Prophets Hosea and Elijah that they were merciless. God forbid! They were not merciless. Would one who is merciless strive to save? In answer, consider the parable of a prince whom the king brought to trial and who was sentenced to be burnt alive. What

did the king's coadjutor do? He said to the king: "Leave him in prison, let him suffer hunger, and then burn him." What he had in mind in suggesting that the prince's execution be delayed was that with the passage of time the king's wrath would turn away.

Similarly, when Elijah saw Israel go astray after Ahab, Elijah said: It is better [that they endure] three years of famine than that they fall into the pit of destruction. Hence out of love Elijah brought such an affliction upon them.²

Similarly, when Hosea said: *Give them, O Lord, whatsoever Thou wilt give; give them a miscarrying womb and dry breasts* (Hos. 9:14), he spoke thus out of compassion. What parable is apt here? That of a man who was sentenced to die, with all his property going to the king's treasury. But the king's friend stood up, interceded in the man's behalf, and procured a milder sentence for him. Thereupon the king said to his friend: Let the condemned man's cultivated fields be forfeited to the treasury, but because of your intercession let his other real holdings remain in his estate. Similarly, the Holy One, blessed be He, sentenced Israel to die, saying, *Yea, they will indeed bring up their children, but I will bereave them when their children are full grown*³ (Hos. 9:12). Hosea spoke up: I beg of Thee, bereave them not, *May they sow the wind, may they reap the whirlwind, may they have no standing grain* (Hos. 8:7)—[may they be rendered incapable of generating children]. For once parents have brought up their children, how canst Thou destroy them? It were better that Israel *have no standing grain* [at all for their wives]. God replied: I caused to be written in the Torah *And thy desire shall be to thy husband* (Gen. 3:16), and thou sayest, "Better that Israel *have no standing grain* [for their wives]!" Hosea answered God: If, then, their wives become pregnant, I beg of Thee, *give them a miscarrying womb*, and if Thou wilt not have them miscarry, then give them *dry breasts*,

2. See 1 Kings 17:1, 18:1.

3. JV: *Yea, though they bring up their children, yet will I bereave them, that there be not a man left.*

so that their infants will die, for the grief at the loss of a little one is not like the grief at the loss of one that is full grown. But the Holy One, blessed be He, declared to Hosea: I will abide by what I have decreed: *I will bereave them when their children are full grown.*

When Hosea realized that the Holy One, blessed be He, would not listen to him, he came to Israel and said to them: I pleaded strongly, but God would not heed me. Therefore plead for yourselves, for He cannot bring Himself to turn you away. Hence *Return, O Israel.*

4. Another comment: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.* Consider the verse in the light of the parable concerning a prince whose friend said to him: Though your father smite you, keep you in prison, make you submit to the authority of slaves, and bring you to near-death by starvation, in the end, when you turn to him and plead with him, he will receive you. Oh, if you would only listen to me and bring yourself to do the last thing first! Go to him and plead with him: he will receive you, and you will earn exemption from his affliction of you. So did Hosea speak to Israel: Know ye that He will smite you, as is said *I will pour out My wrath upon them like water* (Hos. 5:10); and make you submit to kingdoms, as is said *Their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue* (Hos. 7:16); and bring you to near-death by starvation, as is said *Therefore will I take back My corn in the time thereof, and My wine in the season thereof* (Hos. 2:11). And after such affliction, as a consequence you will come and plead with Him. Oh, if you would only listen to me and call out and repent before you are smitten, by your repentance you will earn exemption from affliction. Hence, *Return, O Israel.*

5. Another comment: *Return, O Israel.* All the Prophets call Israel to repentance, but none call like Hosea. Jeremiah said: *If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the Lord, yea, return unto Me* (Jer. 4:1), and Isaiah said: *Seek ye the Lord while He may be*

found (Isa. 55:6). But neither one taught Israel what to say. It was Hosea who told them to return in penitence, and also taught them what to say in order to procure forgiveness for themselves: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God*, [he told them]. *Take with you words, and return unto the Lord, say unto Him: "Forgive all iniquity, and accept that which is good,"* etc. (Hos. 14:2-3).

Another comment: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast stumbled in thine iniquity*. All the Prophets who chastised Israel, chastised them by referring to them as fallen. Jeremiah said: *Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery places . . . they shall be thrust, and fall therein* (Jer. 23:12). So, too, Amos said: *The virgin of Israel is fallen, she shall no more rise* (Amos 5:2). But Hosea termed her as no more than a stumbler: *for thou hast stumbled in thine iniquity*.

6. Another comment: *Return, O Israel*. Returning to Him is beloved of the Holy One, blessed be He. Because of such return He annuls His previous words. For example? Even though it is written in the Torah *When a man taketh a wife, and marrieth, then it cometh to pass, if she find no favor in his eyes . . . that he writeth her a bill of divorcement . . . and she . . . goeth and becometh another man's wife, and the latter husband hateth her, and writeth her a bill of divorcement . . . her former husband who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled* (Deut. 24:1-4), the Holy One, blessed be He, annuls the edict stated in these verses. For though Israel forsook Him and served another—"they forsook the Lord and served Him not" (Judg. 10:6)—nevertheless He said to them: "Return in penitence: come to Me, and I will receive you." On this subject Jeremiah is quite explicit, saying: *If a man put away his wife, and she go from him, and become another man's, may he return unto her again? Will not that land be greatly polluted? Though thou hast played the harlot with many lovers, "Return to Me,"⁴ saith the Lord* (Jer. 3:1) [to Israel]. "Come and

4. JV: "But thou hast played . . . and wouldst thou yet return to Me?"

I will receive you." Hence, *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.*

7. Another comment: *Return.* To what heights of esteem is repentance elevated! Of all the things which the Holy One, blessed be He, created [before creating the earth],⁵ He so esteems repentance that He swears by nothing other than His receiving graciously the repentant who turn to Him. Thus Ezekiel says, *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live* (Ezek. 33:11). Accordingly, *Say unto Him . . . "Receive us graciously"* (Hos. 14:3). Since He swore that He would receive the repentant, it follows that we ought to go to Him. Hence, *Return, O Israel.*

Another comment: *Return, O Israel.* We find that as a consequence of Israel's wickedness God had no alternative other than to take Himself far away, and yet we find Him saying: "Behold, it is I who will return."⁶ In this connection, consider the parable of a king's son who became ill. The physician said: If he eats some of this stuff, he will be surprised to find that it tastes good, and he will be cured. But the son being too timid to eat it, his father said to him: "You want to see that it will not injure you? Behold, I shall eat of it." So, too, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: Are you too timid to avow penitence? Behold, I shall return first, as is said *Thus saith the Lord: Behold, I will turn* (Jer. 30:18). Now if He who is without sin or fault—God forgive us for using such terms in connection with Him—said, *Behold, I will turn*, how much more necessary it is that the children of men turn in penitence and come nigh unto the Holy One, blessed be He! Hence, *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.*

Another comment: *Return, O Israel.* When a man brings himself to complete repentance, then the greatest sins which he

5. Before creating the earth, God created seven things, one of these being repentance. See Piska 37, n. 2, and MTeh 90:12.

6. Cf. Piska 15.8, beginning.

formerly committed will not be counted against him, nor even brought to mind against him. And the proof? The verse in Isaiah which says explicitly: *And the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind* (Isa. 65:17). Indeed, return to God is far more beloved than Temple offerings: As the prophet Samuel said, *Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken better than the fat of rams* (1 Sam. 15:22).

8. Another comment: *Return, O Israel*. Woe unto them, unto the wicked who die without returning to God, and thus destroy their hope for the world-to-come. Lo, angels are assigned to every human being. And every day they record his deeds, so that everything he does is known to the Holy One, blessed be He, and everything is put down on his record and marked with a seal. When a man is righteous, his righteousness is recorded; when a man does wrong, his wrongdoing is recorded. Accordingly, when a righteous man arrives at the end of his days, his recording angels precede him into heaven singing his praise and saying *Let him come in peace; let him rest in his bed*⁷ (Isa. 57:2). But when a wicked man dies, a man who did not bring himself to turn in repentance to God, the Holy One, blessed be He, says to him: "Let thy soul be blasted in despair! How many times did I call upon thee to repent, and thou didst not!" *The eyes of the wicked shall fail, and they shall have no way to flee, and their hope shall end with the blasting*⁸ *of the soul* (Job 11:20). The clear-sighted say, "Since it is so, since He is the Source of hope⁹ for those who turn in repentance, therefore Prophets have always spoken to us of turning to the Lord our God: *Come, and let us return unto the Lord; for He hath torn, and He will heal us, He hath smitten, and He will bind us up*" (Hos. 6:1).

Another comment: *Return, O Israel*. You are fools who say, "It may be that if we return, He will not receive us." Behold, the

7. MT: *let them rest in their beds*. Cf. Piska 2:3.

8. JV: *shall be the drooping*.

9. See Jer. 17:13 and Yoma 8:9.

prophecies are all to the contrary. Hence you need not be called fools, for Scripture says many times not only *Return, ye backsliding children* (Jer. 3:22), but promises that you will not be the losers. What will happen? *I will heal your backslidings* (*ibid.*). Likewise Isaiah prophesied: *Peace, peace, to him that is far off and to him that is near, saith the Lord . . . and I will heal him* (Isa. 57:19). What sort of man is the one that Isaiah speaks of as *far off*? If he is a man who has deliberately set himself far off from God, then why should the man who is near the Holy One, blessed be He, be coupled with him as one who also requires healing? What healing does the man near God require? None. Actually Isaiah is speaking in the verse of the wicked man who was far off, but who brought himself to return in repentance, so that he is now near the Holy One, blessed be He. Hence the verse is to be read *Peace, peace, to him that was far off but is now near*. So Hosea said: Since He heals those who return, *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God*.

9. Another comment: *Return, O Israel*. Five things bring redemption.¹⁰ A man's dire distress may be the cause of his being redeemed: *In thy distress, when all these things are come upon thee* (Deut. 4:30). A time already set may be the cause of his being redeemed: *in the end of days* (*ibid.*). A man's turning in repentance may be the cause: *thou wilt return to the Lord thy God* (*ibid.*). The mercy of God may be the cause: *for the Lord thy God is a merciful God* (Deut. 4:31). Or the merit of the Fathers may be the cause: *He will not . . . forget the covenant with thy fathers* (*ibid.*). The return to God, in itself a cause of redemption, also draws after it two other causes of redemption, namely the mercy of God and the merit of the Fathers, for Scripture says, *Thou wilt return to the Lord thy God, and hearken unto His voice*, and follows at once with *for the Lord thy God is a merciful God . . . He will not . . . forget the covenant with thy fathers* (*ibid.*). Therefore, let us return to Him, for we have no God like Him who will receive us whenever we turn from transgression.

10. Cf. MTeh 106:9.

Another comment: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.* Consider the parable of a prince who was far away from his father—a hundred days' journey away. His friends said to him: "Return to your father." He replied: "I cannot: I have not the strength." Thereupon his father sent word, saying to him: "Come back as far as you can according to your strength, and I will go the rest of the way to meet you." So the Holy One, blessed be He, says to Israel: *Return unto Me, and I will return unto you* (Mal. 3:7).

Another comment: *Return, O Israel.* Consider the parable of a prince who had to appear for judgment in his father's chamber of justice. He was told: "Plead with your father while he is still in his palace, and before he sits down on the dais as your judge and releases the full force of his judgment upon you." Likewise Hosea said to them, to Israel: *Return, O Israel, while thy God, [who by this name is God the Judge], is yet the Lord [thy Father]* (Hos. 14:2) abiding in the palace of His mercy—return in repentance to Him. For the Holy One, blessed be He, is merciful and gracious and desires a turning to Him before He sits as your judge on the dais whence He must release the full force of His judgment upon you.

When flesh-and-blood is angry at his fellow, his fellow brings him a gift so that he will receive and forgive him, but the giver is doubtful whether his gift will be accepted. With the Holy One, blessed be He, there is no doubt. Words alone suffice Him: *Take with you words* (Hos. 14:3). Moreover, when a man goes to honor the king, he goes <to the king> loaded with gifts and returns empty. With the Holy One, blessed be He, it is otherwise. Men go to Him empty-handed and return loaded with gifts. They say to Him: *Forgive all iniquity (ibid.)*, and He replies: *And accept that which is good (ibid.)*. Therefore the prophet praises God for the abundance of His mercies, and says to Him: *Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth the iniquity, and passeth by the transgression!* (Micah 7:18).

Another comment: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.* Our holy Rabbi [Judah] expounded the verse as follows: So great is the power of a return in repentance that the repentance

soars straight up to God. Indeed, as soon as a man resolves in his heart upon the act of repentance, his repentance soars up not to a height of ten miles, nor of twenty, nor of a hundred, but to a height that would require a journey of five hundred years to accomplish—soaring not merely to the first heaven, nor to the second heaven, but ever soaring upwards until it stands before the throne of glory itself. Such was Hosea's thought when he said: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.*

Another comment: *Unto the Lord thy God.* They said to Him: Master of the universe, we are in dread of our iniquities, seeing that they are so many. As David said: *Mine iniquities are gone over my head* (Ps. 38:5). And as Ezra also said: *Our iniquities are increased over our head, and our guiltiness is grown up into the heavens* (Ezra 9:6). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Dread not the heap of your iniquities. If they are heaped up unto the heavens, and you resolve to return in repentance, I shall forgive you—even if they are heaped up not merely to the first, or the second, or the third, but to the seventh heaven, indeed to the throne of glory itself, if you resolve to return, I shall at once receive you. So, *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.* Return, O Israel—even if the heap of your iniquities goes all the way up to the Lord your God.

10. Another comment: *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord.* Israel said to Him: Master of the universe, if we resolve upon a return, wouldst Thou have a witness present to testify that Thou didst receive us? He replied: I would have your advocate, Michael, be your witness, as is said *And at that time shall Michael stand up . . . who standeth for the children of thy people* (Dan. 12:1). Then Israel said: "We seek no witness but Thee."¹¹ Whereupon God said to them: "Come, then, seek My face, and I Myself will bear witness concerning you." And you have a way of learning that God Himself will bear witness, for consider this question: Which measure is the greater, the measure of goodness or the measure of wrath? Clearly, the measure of goodness.

11. "as is said" is deleted. See Friedmann's n. 65.

Come and see how. Though it is not in keeping with the dignity of the Holy One, blessed be He, to bear witness concerning such matters, yet He in His glory bears witness against those guilty of adultery and of sorcery, as is said *I will come near you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the adulterers and against the sorcerers*¹² (Mal. 3:5). In speaking thus, the Holy One, blessed be He, meant, "If I bear witness against him who is a sinner, how much more and more willingly will I bear witness in behalf of him who resolves upon a return in repentance!" And so Hosea must be interpreted as saying *Return, O Israel, for the Lord thy God will bear witness*.¹³

They said to Him: "Master of the universe, upon our return, what wilt Thou do with all our iniquities?" He replied: Resolve upon a return, and they will be swallowed up from the sight of the world, as is said *The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none, and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found* (Jer. 50:20). Israel asked Him: "And whither wilt Thou cast them?" He replied: Into the sea, as is said *He will again have compassion upon us: He will subdue our iniquities; and Thou wilt cast all their sins into the depths of the sea* (Micah 7:19).

12. MT: *against the sorcerers and against the adulterers.*

13. By a slight change in vowels 'ad, "unto" can be read "ed," "witness."

SUMMARY

God's eagerness to forgive
on the Day of Atonement

A man who has had an involuntary emission of seed on the night before the Day of Atonement is permitted to wash himself on the following day, even though on that day washing is ordinarily forbidden. Nevertheless he is permitted to wash himself on the Day of Atonement, because on this day everything is done that can possibly be done to cleanse Israel (Sec. 1). Thus when Satan fetches iniquities to put in the pan of iniquities and weight the balance against Israel, God takes them out of the pan and hides them under His royal purple (Sec. 2). Indeed, making Himself forget Israel's sins of the preceding year, He annually forgives Israel's iniquities and imputes none whatever to them (Sec. 3).

*A Psalm of David. Maschil. Happy
is he whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is pardoned. Happy is the
man unto whom the Lord counteth not in-
iquity (Ps. 32:1-2).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: A man who has had an involuntary emission of seed on the night before² the Day of Atonement—is he permitted, because of what happened to him, to wash himself on the Day of Atonement as he would if it were not the Day of Atonement? Our Masters taught as follows: A man

1. In his n. 1 Friedmann suggests that Ps. 32 was apparently the Psalm for the Day of Atonement. He also notes that Sof 19:2 gives Ps. 103 and 130 as the Psalms for the day.

2. "the night before"—Parma MS.

who has had an involuntary emission of seed on the night before² the Day of Atonement is permitted to wash himself on the Day of Atonement as he would if it were not the Day of Atonement,³ but he must go to a secluded place to wash himself. For there is nothing better loved by the Lord than delicacy of behavior: *Walk modestly with the Lord thy God* (Micah 6:8). Thus though the Torah in this special case permits cleansing in a ritual bath, the cleansing is permitted only if done in a secluded place.⁴ But why permitted? Because for the sake of your being cleansed, O Israel, everything is done that can possibly be done: the Holy One, blessed be He, on the Day of Atonement would cleanse Israel by making atonement for their sins, as is said *For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you* (Lev. 16:30). Atonement, do you suppose, for any other people as well? No, only for Israel, Israel alone, even as the prophet Micah said: *Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth the iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage?* (Micah 7:18)—that is, it is only Israel whom He forgives.

When David saw how the Holy One, blessed be He, forgives the iniquities of Israel and has mercy upon them, he went on to describe the children of Israel as happy and to praise them: *Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.*

2. *A Psalm of David. Maschil. Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned.* These words are to be considered in the light of a verse from another Psalm: *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people, Thou hast pardoned all their sins. Selah* (Ps. 85:3). You find that Satan comes on the Day of Atonement to accuse Israel and he specifies the iniquities of Israel, saying: Master of the universe, there are adulterers among the nations of the earth; so, too, among Israel. There are thieves among the nations of the earth; so, too, among Israel. But the

3. Cf. Tos Yoma 5[4]:5; Maimonides, Code, III, III, iii, 3 (YJS, 14, 263).

4. "the cleansing . . . in a secluded place"—Parma MS.

Holy One, blessed be He, specifies the just deeds of Israel. Then what does He do? He suspends the beam of the scales and looks to see what the balance or imbalance is between the iniquities and the just deeds. And as they are weighed—the iniquities against the just deeds, these against those—the two pans of the scale balance exactly. Thereupon Satan goes out to fetch more iniquities to put in the pan of iniquities and bring it down. What does the Holy One, blessed be He, do? Even while Satan is going about seeking iniquities, the Holy One, blessed be He, takes the iniquities out of the pan and hides them under His royal purple.⁵ Then Satan comes and finds no iniquity on the scales, as is said *The iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none* (Jer. 50:20). When Satan sees there is no iniquity, he cries out before the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, *Thou hast carried away the iniquity of Thy people!*⁶ (Ps. 85:3). When David realized what God does, he said: How mercifully He carries away iniquity, how mercifully He hides their sin! Thereupon David went on to praise Israel as *Happy is he whose transgression is carried away, whose sin is hidden*⁷ (Ps. 32:1).

3. Another comment: *Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven* (nšwy). Read the word nšwy not with the letter samek but with the letter šin (nšwy), so that the word means “forgotten,” for, as R. Berechiah the Priest said: God has Himself forget our sins of the preceding year when annually He forgives our iniquities, as is said *This shall be an everlasting statute to you, to make atonement for the children of Israel [by putting their iniquities out of sight]* (Lev. 16:34); and Scripture also says, *Once in the year shall [Aaron] make atonement upon [the altar] throughout your generations, [so that your iniquities will*

5. His attribute of mercy. The purple is said to be the place in which the names of martyrs are inscribed (see MTeh 9:13).

6. Previously rendered, *Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of Thy people.*

7. By a play on the meanings of nš, “forgive, carry away,” and ksh, “pardon, hide,” the commentator retranslates the verse to make his point.

be put out of sight] (Exod. 30:10). Hence it is said *Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven*—that is, forgotten.

Happy is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity (Ps. 32:2). R. Simeon ben Lakish said: What parable applies here? That of a woman to whom infidelity was imputed, so that she had to drink the water of bitterness⁸ and was thus found sinless. One man declared to his fellows: "Happy is the woman who after drinking the water of bitterness is found sinless."⁹ Another replied: "Even more happy is the woman who is not required to drink the water of bitterness at all, because no iniquity whatever has been imputed to her."

Likewise when David said, *Happy is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is pardoned*, the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Even more *Happy is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity*. And who are they whose transgressions the Holy One, blessed be He, overlooks? They are the children of Israel, to whom on the Day of Atonement no iniquity is imputed, since after they have specified their iniquities and transgressions, the Holy One, blessed be He, carries away their iniquities. Scripture says, *He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy* (Prov. 28:13). When Israel specify their iniquities and confess them before the Holy One, blessed be He, He forgives them, passing by their transgressions, as is said *For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you; from all your iniquities shall ye be clean before the Lord* (Lev. 16:30). When the prophet realized what God does, he began singing His praise—praise of the Holy One, blessed be He—on this account, saying *Who is a God like unto Thee, that carrieth away the iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He retaineth not His anger for ever, because He delighteth in mercy* (Micah 7:18).

8. See Num. 5.

9. "One man declared . . . found sinless"—Parma MS.

PISKA 46

SUMMARY

The Sabbath's deliverance
of Adam and of the world

In one important respect the very first New Year's Day was like the beginning of the first day of creation, for on the first New Year's Day, which was also the first Sabbath day, daylight continued for 36 hours, and night did not fall at its set time. The reason night did not fall was to spare Adam the terror of the dark. Because of his disobedience, God meant to destroy him, but the Sabbath interceded for him so successfully that God not only spared him but also held back the darkness for him (Sec. 1).

In truth, the Sabbath's intercession was the culminating event in God's creation of Adam. Since the world was created for the sake of man, the Sabbath's intercession and the remission of the death sentence which had been imposed on Adam saved the world from reverting to emptiness and chaos (Sec. 2).

Hence the world is orderly: God created in it the four points from which the winds blow, He placed four angels around His throne, and He caused four standards to be set up in Israel's camp in the wilderness. His presence is in the names of the four angels, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, and Raphael, each of whom has his special characteristic. Likewise, in keeping with the qualities characteristic of the Tribes of Israel, each tribe was assigned to its particular place in the camp in the wilderness (Sec. 3).

<Additament>¹

1. Since 1 Sam. 1:1-2:10 is the haftarah for the first day of New Year, ZA and Mah regard this Piska as belonging to the New Year's Day cycle. But Friedmann in his n. 1 disagrees, regarding the Piska as a miscellany made up of items not germane to the theme of the New Year. Actually the items are germane to the theme of repentance.

1. [Unto Hannah, Elkanah gave] *a single portion but handsome*² ('pym) (1 Sam. 1:5)—a choice portion regarded by everyone as the best. In this verse 'pym, whose literal meaning is "faces," is taken to mean "handsome," because approval was written upon all the faces that regarded Hannah's portion. An analogous use of the word pny ("faces") in the sense of "handsome" is to be found in the verse *The Temple was the most handsome* (pny)³ (1 Kings 6:17).

[Eli the priest said to Hannah]: *The Lord make allowance for thine error*⁴ (1 Sam. 1:17)—make allowance for you, that is, despite your having spoken erroneously against heaven.⁵ The word š'lh, meaning "petition," is defectively written šlh in the text and is thus to be read "error," as in the phrase *for his error* (šl) (2 Sam. 6:7).

And the Lord remembered her (1 Sam. 1:19): Hannah was remembered on New Year's Day.⁶

"This day, [New Year's Day], is like the beginning of Thy work, for it is a remembrance of the first day of creation."⁷ How can "This day, [New Year's Day]," possibly be considered as commemorating "the beginning of Thy work"? It can be so considered because the very first New Year's Day in a very important respect was like⁸ "the beginning of Thy work." Consider: God created the world on the twenty-fifth day of Elul. Since calendar reckoning begins with the creation of Torah two thousand years before the creation of the world, it can be figured out that the first day of creation fell on a Sunday, the twenty-

2. Apparently the commentator feels constrained to read the verse thus, because it begins by speaking clearly of a single portion. What follows must therefore be understood in a sense other than *a double portion*, as in JV. Cf. Piska 43.7.

3. JV: *The Temple before* (pny) [*the Sanctuary*].

4. JV: *The Lord of Israel grant thy petition*.

5. See Piska 43.3.

6. An inference drawn from her using the words *The Lord judgeth the ends of the earth* (1 Sam. 2:10)—the time for God's judgment being New Year's Day. See Piska 40.1.

7. The quotation is from a prayer attributed to Abba 'Ariḳa and recited during the *Musaf* on New Year's Day. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 879.

8. "like"—Za; PE: "at."

fifth day of Elul. On this first day the heavenly luminaries were created, but they were not hung in the sky until the fourth day, so that their light, not yet subject to the cycle of day and night, continued undiminished not only for the thirty-six hours of day-time but also for the thirty-six hours corresponding to night-time. That the light was undiminished, we infer from the verse which says, *And God said: "Let there be luminaries in the firmament of the heaven"* (Gen. 1:14). Why should God have said this, since light already existed? In order *to divide the day from the night* (*ibid.*).⁹ Hence the luminaries, [the sun, the moon, the stars], were hung in the sky on the fourth day. Before they were hung, was there no night dividing the day? No: for three days and three nights the light of the first day shone undiminished.

Now the same thing happened on the first Sabbath which was also the first New Year's Day, [the first day of Tishri]. ([On Wednesday, that is the twenty-eighth day of Elul, the day the luminaries were hung in the sky], there were still two days to go to complete the thirty days that the month of Elul had that year. The thirtieth day fell on a Friday, Friday thus being a day in Elul.¹⁰ The next day, which was the Sabbath day, [the first of Tishri], was also New Year's Day). On this day also daylight continued for thirty-six hours, for night did not fall at its set time.

[The reason night did not fall was to spare Adam the terror of the dark]: Adam sinned [on Friday towards the end of the day and was not put to death for his sin, but] was driven out from Eden¹¹ on the same day, for the Sabbath had come and spoken in his behalf, spoken so beseechingly that on the next

9. The preceding statements *And there was evening and there was morning* (Gen. 1:5, 8, 13) would accordingly be construed as meaning "There came the time which after the fourth day was to be divided into evening and into morning."

10. Since Saturday was the first day of Tishri, it follows that the preceding Friday belonged to Elul, showing that in that year Elul was a full month of 30 days, and not a defective month of 29 days.

11. See Piska 23.6; and MTeh 92:3.

day, which was New Year's Day, his pardon grew from her pleading. As Scripture says of the Sabbath, *The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich* (Prov. 10:22). The Sabbath indeed enriches those who keep it, as Joseph, the honorer of Sabbaths, was enriched.¹² The same verse goes on to say, *and Thou shalt add no sorrow with it (ibid.)*: death had been the sentence imposed on Adam, but the Sabbath said, "Do not add sorrow on my day, and do not put him to death."

The blessing of the Lord is what is referred to in the words *And God blessed the seventh day* (Gen. 2:3). Blessed it with what? With light, for He gave the Sabbath an extra measure of light by holding back the darkness on the Sabbath eve so that, [with Friday's daylight and] with the daylight of the Sabbath itself, there were thirty-six hours of continuous light. This He provided in order not to distress Adam who had not yet seen the dark of night. Thus this light of the Sabbath, which was also New Year's Day, was like the light of the first day of the world, the light that lasted for the thirty-six hours [of the three nights of the first three days of creation], even as this one lasted for thirty-six hours. Consequently we say, "This day, [New Year's Day], is like the beginning of Thy work," meaning, "like the event at the beginning of Thy work." New Year's Day "is a remembrance of the first day of creation," for the light of the first New Year's Day lasted as did the light of the first day of creation.

It is this light of the first New Year's Day that Scripture alludes to in the verse *Thy mercy, O God, reached unto high heaven, as shown by what Thou didst with the luminaries called "great"*¹³ (Ps. 71:19). God showed His mercy up to the very heights of heaven in extending the light of the first New Year's Day [to thirty-six hours]. The words *as is shown by what Thou didst with the luminaries called "great"* refer to the heavenly luminaries termed *the two great lights* (Gen. 1:16).

12. See B. Shab 119a.

13. JV: *Thy righteousness also, O God, which reacheth unto high heaven; Thou who hast done great things.*

Thou didst provide the continuous light of the first New Year's Day in order to deal mercifully with Adam. True, he sinned. Even so, Thou didst prolong the light for his sake in order not to distress him. In referring to God's mercy to Adam, Scripture says, *Is there any number of His armies? And upon whom, [however unworthy], doth not His light shine?* (Job 25:3). It shone [even] upon Adam: though he sinned, the light lasted thirty-six hours for him.

[The commentary on the New Year's Day prayer cited above continues with exposition of the words] *For it is a portion for Israel* (Ps. 81:5)—that is, on New Year's Day a man is allotted his portion, his livelihood. The verse goes on: *and judgment by the God of Jacob (ibid.)*—that is, on New Year's Day the Holy One, blessed be He, passes judgment on His creatures. If Adam was saved from the judgment, it was because of the Sabbath which interceded on his behalf.

Hence it was Adam who composed the Psalm for the Sabbath as a song of joy, *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord*, etc. (Ps. 92:2). Moses was the one who gave this Psalm its heading made up of words which give an acrostic of his, Moses', name: *A Psalm, a song. For the Sabbath day.*¹⁴ *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord.*

2. Matters concerning Adam as alluded to in the following verses were also submitted in the questions put in writing to our holy Rabbi [Judah], the verses being: *For in six days the Lord made*, etc. (Exod. 20:11), *and on the seventh day God finished*, etc. (Gen. 2:2). "Finished on the seventh day?" Can this possibly mean that the Holy One, blessed be He, did work on the Sabbath? Perish the thought! The fact is that He *rested on the seventh day* (Exod. 20:11), for so it is written *And He rested on the seventh day* (Gen. 2:2), and *In it He rested from all His work* (Gen. 2:3). How then can the words *on the seventh day God finished* be explained? As follows: You find that when the

14. In the Hebrew the first four words begin with the letters which, slightly rearranged, read LMŠH, "by Moses."

Holy One, blessed be He, was creating His world, He created three kinds of creatures every day, but on the day before the Sabbath he was occupied the entire day with the making of Adam.¹⁵ In the first hour, he came into being as a thought; in the second hour, God consulted the ministering angels concerning him; in the third hour of the day, God gathered up the dust out of which He was to make Adam; in the fourth, God kneaded the dust; in the fifth, God jointed the parts and gave him shape—as Adam himself <says> in the verse *When I was made in secret, and curiously wrought out of the lowest parts of the earth*¹⁶ (Ps. 139:15); in the sixth, God stood him on his feet and he stood from earth to heaven, as is said *God created man upon the earth, and from the one end of heaven unto the other* (Deut. 4:32); in the seventh, God blew the breath of life into him; in the eighth, God brought him into the Garden of Eden; in the ninth, God enjoined him, “Eat of this tree, but do not eat of that one”; in the tenth, he sinned; in the eleventh, he was brought to judgment; in the twelfth, the verdict [of his expulsion from Eden] was pronounced against him. Not a sentence of death, for the Sabbath interceding in his behalf had delivered him from the sentence and got him his remission. It was then he began to sing in praise of the Sabbath, as is said *A Psalm, a song. For the Sabbath day* (Ps. 92:1). Thereupon the Sabbath said to him: Let us—me and thee—sing praise to the Holy One, blessed be He, that He endowed me with the strength to intercede, as is said *It is a good thing to sing praise unto the Lord*, etc. (Ps. 92:2).

Until the Sabbath came to intercede, the King [of kings] had been on his throne deeply troubled about His world—if one dare speak of Him in such a way—saying: “All that I created, I created for the sake of man. Now his sentence [of death] is about to be pronounced, a sentence which will set to naught all the work that I have done, and the world will revert to emptiness

15. Though other things also were created on the sixth day, nevertheless it was with the making of Adam that God was occupied the entire day.

16. Carefully made, my parts articulated out of the dust.

and chaos.”¹⁷ But even as the King [of kings] was grieving, the Sabbath had entered to intercede and Adam had been granted his remission. That was when the Holy One, blessed be He, said: All that I made—the Sabbath is responsible for its being finished, as is said *And by means of the seventh day God finished* (Gen. 2:2).¹⁸

3. *The Lord by wisdom established the order of the world; with design He readied the heavens* (Prov. 3:19). Even as the Holy One, blessed be He, created four points from which the winds blow, so He placed four angels around His throne, namely, Michael, Gabriel, Uriel, Raphael. And so, too, He caused four standards to be set up in the camp in the wilderness. Michael’s place at His right corresponds to the place where Reuben set his standard, a place which put Reuben¹⁹ on the south²⁰ side of the Tabernacle, Dan on the north side, Judah on the east side, and Ephraim on the west side.²¹ Why is the angel at God’s right called Michael? Because when the children of Israel would be passing through the Red Sea, he would open his mouth and say, *Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, among the mighty?* (Exod. 15:11); and when the Torah would be finished, he would say, *There is none like unto God, O Jeshurun* (Deut. 33:26). The word “who” (*mi*), in *Who is like unto Thee*, and the words “like unto God” (*ka’El*), in *There is none like unto God*, taken together, make up the name “Michael.” Uriel’s place, at God’s left, corresponds to Dan’s place which is termed darkness, [because it was there Jeroboam set up the image of a bull].²² And

17. P has here the following: “The Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say: All that I created is about to cease. Of what avail was it to set down in Scripture the work of the first day, of the second day, the third day, the fourth day, the fifth, the sixth? Whither now the things I wrought? Man is about to have his sentence [of death] pronounced, and the entire work of creation will cease to be.” The passage is deleted, as in FT.

18. Cf. MTeh 92:3.

19. The word *wkn*, “and so” or “and here,” is read with FT *R’wbn*, “Reuben.”

20. *Ymyn*, “right,” is a cognate of *tymn*, “south.”

21. See Num. 2.

22. See 1 Kings 12:28, and Num. Rabbah 2:10; and Piskas 11.3, 12.13, and 20.2, n. 10.

why is he called Uriel, a name made up of the words 'Uri ("my light") and 'El ("the Lord")? Because Torah and the Prophets and the Writings are the light by which the Holy One, blessed be He, makes it possible for Israel to make atonement, the light that illuminates Israel's darkness, as is said *Though I sit in darkness, the Lord is a light unto me* (Micah 7:8). Gabriel's place, at the east, corresponds to that of Moses and Aaron and of the kingdom of the house of David. And why is he called Gabriel, a name made up of the words *Gabri* ("My means whereby I prevail") and 'El ("God")? Because it is written of Judah *For Judah prevailed (gabar) above his brethren* (1 Chron. 5:2), and it is also written of a scion of Judah²³ *And his name is called "Wonderful in counsel is God the Mighty ('El Gibbor)"* (Isa. 9:5). Raphael's place is to the west behind Him. And why is he called Raphael? To intimate that the breach of Jeroboam—Jeroboam was a scion of Ephraim whose standard was on the west side—would be healed. The meaning of the name is indicated by the verse *Repha' (heal) her now, 'El (O God), I beseech Thee* (Num. 12:13).

It is with reference to these correspondences that Scripture says, *With design He readied the heavens*.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Moses, see to it that in the encampment thou formest up the Tribes of Israel in accordance with the qualities characteristic of each. Since the east is the direction whence light comes forth to the world, let the Tribe of Levi be on the side of the camp that faces the east, as is said *Those that were to pitch before the Tabernacle eastward, before the Tent of Meeting toward the sunrising . . . all that were numbered of the Levites* (Num. 3:38, 39). And whence do we know that Levi is associated with light? Because it is said *Of Levi he said: Let Thy Thummim and thy Urim (lights) be with Thy faithful* (Deut. 33:8). And adjacent to Levi shall be the Tribe of Judah who are of kingly splendor, as is said *Now those that pitch . . . toward the sunrising shall be they of the*

23. Hezekiah, who was of the Tribe of Judah, and the Messiah, who will spring from the same Tribe.

standard of the camp of Judah according to their hosts (Num. 2:3). And adjacent to Judah shall be Issachar who is master of the light of Torah. Whence do we know that Torah is called "light"? Because it is said *For the commandment is a lamp, and the Torah is light* (Prov. 6:23). And adjacent to Issachar shall be Zebulun who is master of shining wealth, as is said *Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out [to commerce], and Issachar, in thy tents [of Torah]* (Deut. 33:18).

The south, whence come bounteous rains and beneficent dews—the Tribe of Reuben shall dwell on that side of the camp: it is because of men like Reuben who shed tears of repentance [that God sends the rains].²⁴ Hence *On the south side shall be the standard of . . . Reuben* (Num. 2:10). And adjacent to Reuben shall be Gad, whose strength will come [from the crops that bounteous rains make grow], as is said *Gad, a troop of fighting men shall troop out of him*²⁵ (Gen. 49:19). Reuben and Gad shall be on either side of Simeon, so that between Reuben's penitence and Gad's strength expiation will be made for Simeon.²⁶

The Holy One, blessed be He, continued, saying to Moses: The west whence come snow and icy hail—see to it that there dwell Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, kinsmen of Joseph who was able to impose an icy restraint upon his passion [for Potiphar's wife].²⁷ And whence do we know that these three were called mighty in their self-restraint? Because it is said *Like Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh arouse the might [of Thy restraint at our wrongdoing], and come to save us* (Ps. 80:3). The Presence, of course, is in the west, for it is said *Indeed He dwelleth between [Benjamin's] shoulders* (Deut. 33:12).²⁸

24. See Num. Rabbah 12:10, 12; [Piska 50.4]; and Ginzberg, *Legends*, Index, s.v. "Reuben."

25. At the time of the conquest of Palestine. See Rashi.

26. Jacob cursed Simeon, saying, *Cursed be their anger* (Gen. 49:7).

27. "of Joseph . . . Potiphar's wife]"—Margolioth gloss, Mah, and FT; P: "of Joseph in whom passion grew mighty."

28. Apparently the first part of the verse is read *Of Benjamin he said: The beloved of the Lord, in the desert He dwelleth by him*. So David Luria in his

The Holy One, blessed be He, concluding, said to Moses: The north whence darkness comes forth into the world—see to it that thou arrayest there the Tribe of Dan who in their worship of a bull's image descended into the darkness of idolatry. When Jeroboam went around among all the Tribes [offering the bull's image], none would receive it except the Tribe of Dan. And adjacent to Dan shall be the Tribe of Asher to give light in the darkness, as is said *Of Asher he said: Blessed be Asher [with light and favor] above sons; let him be the favored of his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil* (Deut. 33:24).

Therefore Scripture: *The Lord by wisdom established the order of the world.*

Novellae (Num. Rabbah 10:2), on the basis of a reading in Sif; so, too, according to David Luria, Elijah of Wilno.

SUMMARY

The power of prayer;
Aaron's submission to God

Which is the greater, prayer or repentance? Some say prayer is the greater; others say repentance is (Sec. 1). The story of the death of two of Aaron's sons is told to prove that by the power of Moses' prayer the death of Aaron's two other sons was averted. In reply, however, to Aaron's reproach to God for taking two of his sons, God explained that He took them because otherwise they would have been doomed to live as lepers outside the camps of Israel. Thereupon Aaron said: "I thank Thee. Thou didst a good thing" (Sec. 2).

Aaron's quiet submission to God is compared with Job's rebellious outcry against Him. "Job, why raisest thou a cry?" God asked. "Dost thou consider thyself greater than Adam, than Abraham, than Moses, than Aaron? Not one of these raised a cry against My measure of justice when I punished him." One would have thought that a man of Aaron's eminence, a man so highly honored by God, would have raised a cry against Him when He took his sons, but no—unlike Job, Aaron submitted to the will and wisdom of God.

As God's glory was in the Tabernacle in Aaron's time, so His glory dwells for ever on the rock upon which the Temple was built (Sec. 3).

When Aaron used to enter the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, Satan appeared to make accusations against Israel, but would flee from Aaron's presence because of the merit that accompanied him: the merit of the Patriarchs, of the Matriarchs, of Manasseh and Ephraim, of the Tribes of Israel, of circumcision, and of the Torah.

The first Temple stood 410 years; only eighteen High Priests served in succession in it. But in the Second Temple, where priests

used to outbid one another for the office of High Priest, there was a succession of eighty High Priests (Sec. 4).

*And the Lord spoke to Moses after
the death of the two sons of Aaron
(Lev. 16:1).¹*

1. Let our master instruct us: Which is the greater, prayer or repentance? <In keeping with the tradition of the Amoraim, as R.> Judah ben R. Ḥiyya stated it, <our Masters taught as follows:> Prayer sets aside half of a decree of punishment, and repentance sets aside the other half of the decree.² As R. Joshua ben Levi stated it, our Masters taught: Prayer sets aside half the decree, and repentance sets aside the entire decree. Now according to R. Judah bar Ḥiyya, whence do we know that repentance sets aside half the decree? Because, although it was decreed of Cain *A fugitive and a wanderer (noḏ) shalt thou be in the earth* (Gen. 4:12), yet when he avowed penitence, saying, *My iniquity is greater than can be forgiven* (Gen. 4:13), half the decree—that half which made him a fugitive—was set aside for him, as Scripture indicates in the verse *And Cain . . . dwelt in the land of Noḏ ("wandering"), east of Eden* (Gen. 4:16). R. Joshua ben Levi, however, argued as follows: Repentance sets aside the entire decree, and prayer half the decree. You find that it was so with Jeconiah, king of Judah. For the Holy One, blessed be He, swore in His anger, *As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet on a hand, yet, by My right*—note, as R. Meir said, that it was by His right hand that God swore—*I would pluck thee hence* (Jer. 22:24). And what was decreed against Jeconiah? That he die childless. As is said *Write ye this man childless* (Jer. 22:30). But as soon as he avowed penitence, the Holy One, blessed be He, set aside the decree, as is shown by Scripture's reference to *The sons of Je-*

1. The beginning of the lesson for the Day of Atonement. See B.Meḡ 30b.

2. "Prayer sets aside . . . the other half of the decree"—Parma MS.

coniah—the same is Assir—Shealtiel his son, etc. (1 Chron. 3:17). And Scripture says further: *In that day . . . will I take thee, O Zerubbabel . . . the son of Shealtiel . . . and will make thee as a signet* (Haggai 2:23). Behold, then, how penitence can set aside the entire decree! And whence do we know that prayer can set aside only half the decree? So it was in Aaron's case: When Scripture says, *Moreover the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him* (Deut. 9:20), the phrase *to have destroyed him*, R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi, implies the extirpation of sons and daughters, as indicated in the verse *Yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath* (Amos 2:9). But God did not destroy them. For when Moses prayed in his behalf, as is said *And I prayed for Aaron also the same time* (Deut. 9:20), the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Since thou didst pray in his behalf, thou didst cause half the decree against him to be set aside. Scripture's saying *Unto Eleazar and unto Ithamar, his sons that were left* (Lev. 10:12) proves that they had originally been included in the decree of destruction.³ R. Mana of Shaab, in the name of R.⁴ Levi, found in the prayer *Deliver them that are drawn unto death* (Prov. 24:11) an allusion to Aaron's sons and hence an intimation that Eleazar and Ithamar were delivered by means of prayer. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Aaron: As thou livest, such was the decree—that all thy sons would die. Nevertheless, because Moses prayed, I set aside half the decree, destroying two and permitting two to live. Whence do we know that God acted thus? From what we read in the lesson for the day: *After the death of two of the sons of Aaron*.

2. On the verse *After the death of the two sons of Aaron*, R. Tanhuma in the name of⁵ R. Hiyya began his discourse as follows: *O God, Thou art my God, at the dawn [of my life] I*

3. Which followed Aaron's making of the golden calf. See Targum Jonathan and Rashi.

4. "Joshua ben" deleted, as in Parma MS.

5. "in the name of"—Albeck's emendation in Zunz, *had-Dēraṣot*, p. 388, n. 53; Parma MS and PE: "the son of."

saw Thee;⁶ *my soul thirsteth for Thee. . . . So again I saw Thee in the holy place . . . for Thy loving-kindness is better than life; my lips shall praise Thee* (Ps. 63:2-4). How are we to take the words *O God, Thou art my God*? As follows: At the time the Egyptians decreed against Israel that *Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river* (Exod. 1:22), when a daughter of Israel felt that she was about to give birth, she would go out to a refuse heap and there bring forth her child [in secret]. At once, the Holy One, blessed be He, would come down, wash the child, cleanse it,⁷ and clothe it: *Then washed I thee with water; yea, I cleansed away thy blood from thee . . . I clothed thee also with richly woven work, and shod thee with sealskin* (Ezek. 16:9-10). Therefore, when the children of Israel got to the Red Sea, they recognized God [who had saved them at birth] and pointed at Him with their fingers, saying: *This is my God and I will glorify Him*⁸ (Exod. 15:2). David had in mind these words of the congregation of Israel when he said, *O God, Thou art my God, at the dawn [of my life] I saw Thee*. And when Thou didst execute judgment upon Egypt at the Red Sea, not only did we see Thee and say *This is my God, and I will glorify Him* (Exod. 15:2), [but we suffered no injury at sight of Thee], even as we suffered none when we had seen Thee at the dawn of our life. Then, after executing judgment on Egypt, Thou didst remove Thy glory,⁹ and our soul thirsted to see Thee, as is said *my flesh longeth for Thee* (Ps. 63:2). And where? In the wilderness—*In a dry and weary land, where no water is* (*ibid.*). But after a time *Again I saw Thee in the holy place* (Ps. 63:3): Even as we saw Thee at the Red Sea, so we saw Thee at Sinai, the phrase *holy place* denoting Sinai, as in the verse *The Lord*

6. JV: *carnestly will I seek Thee*. Apparently the word *šhr*, "to seek earnestly," is here understood in its other meaning of "to dawn."

7. "cleanse it"—Friedmann's emendation; Parma MS and P: "provide suck for it."

8. "Therefore, when . . . will glorify Him"—Parma MS.

9. So Mah, who is sustained by Parma MS. I disregard Friedmann's interpolation which results in the reading: "After executing judgment upon Egypt Thou didst accord us Thy glory."

was among them when Sinai was a holy place (Ps. 68:18). For even as we saw Thee at the Red Sea and suffered no injury, so, as implied in the verse *And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand, and they saw God, and did eat and drink*¹⁰ (Exod. 24:11), <we saw Thee at Sinai when it was a holy place because of Thy presence there, saw Thee and suffered no injury at sight of Thee>.

When the Psalm goes on to say, *So have I looked for Thee in Thy Sanctuary, to see Thy power and Thy glory* (Ps. 63:3), whom did David have in mind? Aaron, who said: The generality of Israel saw Thee at the Red Sea and at Sinai and sustained no injury. But I—what befell me? Thou didst cause me to dwell with Thee in the Tabernacle, [saying to me and mine]: *And ye shall not go out from the door of the Tent of Meeting* (Lev. 8:33); at the same time Thou didst forewarn the generality of Israel, *And the common man that draweth nigh shall be put to death* (Num. 1:51). Yet when my sons went in *to see Thy power and Thy glory*, they died.

The Holy One, blessed be He, replied by way of Moses: Tell thy brother Aaron from Me, "I did thee a great kindness and gave thee great honor in that thy sons were consumed by divine fire. Consider: I set them in the innermost one of all the camps, even [beyond that of] thy brother Moses." What was the place of Aaron and his sons in relation to that of the others? The generality of Israel pitched their tents around those of the Levites, *and the Levites*—of whom Moses was one—*pitched round about the Tabernacle of the Testimony* (Num. 1:53). Hence you can see that Aaron and his sons were at the center of the encampment, and Moses outside the center. God went on, still speaking to Aaron by way of Moses: "Now, take note of what Scripture deals with in the passage preceding the one about the encampment. It is a passage dealing with those who suffer a flux or leprosy, and it decrees that anyone who enters the Tent of Meeting without permission shall be stricken with leprosy. Uzziah, for example, entered without permission and was stricken with

10. Onkelos says: "The nobles of Israel suffered no injury."

leprosy.¹¹ And wouldst thou have such a thing—that thy sons, [having entered without permission], be lepers? Wouldst thou ask that those who dwelt within the innermost one of all the camps should dwell by themselves outside all the camps? For *The leper in whom the plague is . . . he shall dwell alone*" (Lev. 13:45-46).

When Aaron heard this, he said: "I thank Thee. Thou didst a good thing in having my sons die¹² instead of having them stay alive as lepers. Therefore I am obliged to thank Thee and praise Thee: *For Thy loving-kindness is better than life; my lips shall praise Thee* (Ps. 63:4)."

Are you spinning out on your own all this about Aaron? What proof is there that David had Aaron in mind in this Psalm? The proof is in the very next verse of the Psalm: *So will I bless Thee as long as I live; in Thy name will I lift up my hands* (Ps. 63:5)—[lift up my hands, that is, in the priestly blessing].

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: Even though the measure of justice has smitten Aaron, nevertheless he thanks Me for the kindness I have done him. Therefore, go and comfort him: *And the Lord, in saying unto Moses: "Speak unto Aaron thy brother"* (Lev. 16:2), clearly meant Moses to speak words of comfort.

3. *And the Lord spoke unto Moses, after the death of the two sons of Aaron* (Lev. 16:1). Blessed is the man whom suffering has smitten, but who overcomes the intensity of his resentment¹³ and raises no cry against the measure of justice.

Behold, when suffering befell Job, had he overcome his resentment and not raised a cry against the measure of justice, he

11. "Uzziah . . . stricken with leprosy"—Parma MS. See Yalkuṭ Ps. 63, and 2 Chron. 26:19.

12. "I thank Thee . . . my sons die"—Parma MS; PE: "I thank Thee for what Thou hast done for me, for the kindness which Thou hast done me, to have my sons die."

13. "the intensity of his resentment"—Parma MS; P: "his compassions"; FT: "his anger."

would have risen to great and praiseworthy eminence. As R. Hanina bar Papa said: Had he not raised a cry, even as now we say in the *Tēfillah*¹⁴ "God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob," we would also be saying "and God of Job." For the Holy One, blessed be He, took counsel of the holy ones in heaven. He said to them: "Job, this servant of Mine, has the fourfold virtue of the most eminent men of the world: he is *a wholehearted and an upright man, one that feareth God, and shunneth evil* (Job. 1:8). All kinds of suffering will smite him. If he stands up to them without raising a cry of resentment, I shall cause My name to be linked with his as I caused My name to be linked with the names of the Patriarchs."

No sooner, however, did suffering smite Job, than he became fractious, saying: *Oh that I knew where I might find Him!* (Job 23:3). Thereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "Alas, Job, thou hast darkened the counsel which I took in heaven." As Scripture says, *Then the Lord answered Job* (Job 38:1). And what did He say to him? *Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge?* (Job 38:2). Oh how thou didst darken counsel *by words without knowledge*, by words which thou didst permit to come from thy mouth! Thou didst say: If I could lay hold of Him, what answer would He give me? *I would know the words which He would answer me, and understand what He would say unto me* (Job 23:5). And Job went on to say: I went everywhere to seek Him and could not find Him. I went toward the east and did not find Him, as is said *Behold, I go forward [toward the east], but He is not there* (Job 23:8). I went toward the west to seek Him, but found Him not: *And backward, but I cannot perceive Him (ibid.)*. I went toward the north to seek Him and did not find Him: *On the left hand, when He doth work, but I cannot behold Him* (Job 23:9). I went toward the south to seek Him, but did not find Him: *He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him (ibid.)*.

14. The statutory prayer, or the Eighteen Benedictions, said three times daily. See Hertz, *APB*, pp. 130 ff.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Job: "Why art thou going around and around wearing thyself out? Behold, I shall reveal Myself to thee. Tell Me how thou wouldst have Me reveal Myself." The worlds above and the worlds below cannot contain the glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, [such is the magnitude of His glory. But to reveal Himself], He confined Himself in the whirlwind: *Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind (s'rh)* (Job 38:1). Or: The Lord whirled like the wind over each and every hair (*s'rh*) of Job, and it was thus that the Holy One, blessed be He, talked with him. The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Job: Why raisest thou a cry? Because suffering befell thee? Dost thou then perhaps consider thyself greater than Adam, the creation of My own hands? Because of a single command that he made nothing of, I decreed death for him and for his progeny. Yet he did not raise a cry. Or consider thyself greater than Abraham? Because he ventured to say, *Whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?* (Gen. 15:8), I put him to trial after trial, saying to him, *Know of a surety that thy seed shall be a stranger* (Gen. 15:13). Yet he did not raise a cry. Or consider thyself greater than Isaac? Because he persisted in loving Esau I made his eyes dim: *And it came to pass, that when Isaac was old, and his eyes were dim, so that he could not see*¹⁵ (Gen. 27:1). Or consider thyself greater than Moses? Because he spoke in anger to Israel, saying *Hear now, ye rebels* (Num. 20:10), I decreed as punishment for him that he should not enter into the Land. Yet he did not raise a cry. Or consider thyself greater than Aaron? To no other mortal in the world have I given like honor. For he was clothed in the eight garments of holiness,¹⁶ and whenever he entered the Holy of Holies, the ministering angels would flee from his presence, as we know from the verse *There shall be no man in the Tent of Meeting when he goeth in* (Lev. 16:17), where the term *man* refers to the minister-

15. And was thus unable to go to the market place where people would say, "Here is the father of this scoundrel!" See Gen. Rabbah 65:10.

16. The linen tunic, breeches, miter, and girdle; as well as the breastplate, the ephod, the robe, and the golden plate or diadem. See Yoma 7:5.

ing angels: "As for the likeness of their faces, they had the face of a man" (Ezek. 1:10). Such was the tribute of honor they paid him that they fled from his presence.¹⁷ My glory, as Scripture tells, filled the House of the Lord, *So that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord filled [the House]* (1 Kings 8:11). Nevertheless, whenever Aaron came in, such is the honor I accorded him that I would remove My glory <from where it reposed> between the two cherubim.

With reference to this withdrawal of His glory, God said to Job: *Doth the eagle mount up at thy command?* (Job 39:27). The words *at thy command*, according to R. Tanhuma, signify that at Aaron's entrance the Holy One, blessed be He, made His glory mount up from between the two cherubim. And that it is the Holy One, blessed be He, who is referred to in the words *Doth the eagle mount up* is proved by the figure of speech in Deuteronomy which refers to God "As an eagle stirring up her nest" (Deut. 32:11). That He withdrew His glory while Aaron was in the Tabernacle is indicated by the words *He maketh His nest on high* (Job 39:27). But, [says God], even though I caused My glory to mount up and away in honor of Aaron at his entrance into the Tabernacle, nevertheless, as the very next verse goes on to say of Me, *He dwelleth on the rock* (Job 39:28)—the rock which is My Tabernacle. This is to say that after Aaron went out of the Tent, God's glory returned from on high and again filled the Tent.

Another comment: *He dwelleth . . . on the rock*—dwelt there during the days of the First Temple when the Ark was there. And even during the days of the Second Temple, when the Ark was not there and only the rock was there, My glory still reposed *upon the crag of the rock, and the stronghold (ibid.)*.

Another comment: *He dwelleth . . . on the rock*. This verse contains the refutation of what some argue, as follows: "True, the Holy One, blessed be He, declared, 'I will build a Temple,' and true, He built it. But when you sinned, He destroyed it, and

17. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 382, n. 4.

the conclusion is that it will not be built again." To one who argues thus, reply: The text does not say "He dwelt . . . on the rock," but *He dwelleth . . . on the rock*; does not say, "and abode," but *and abideth*. Upon what, is it said, does God abide? *Upon the crag of the rock, and the stronghold*. And what is *the stronghold*? It is the stronghold of Zion, so spoken of in the verse "Nevertheless David took the stronghold of Zion" (2 Sam. 5:7).

[To return to the High Priest]: *From within [the Tabernacle] he spieth out (ḥafar) food* (Job 39:29)—that is, he spies out the prospects for good or bad crops in the coming year. And then, if the prospects are bad, the [High] Priest says in his prayer, "May it be Thy will, O Lord, that if it is to be a dry year, [let it be at least preceded by heavy rains]." ¹⁸ That the word *ḥafar* here means "spy out" is shown by the verse "Let us send men before us, that they may spy out (*ḥfr*) the Land for us" (Deut. 1:22). If *his eyes behold afar off* (Job 39:29), it is because I, [the Lord], reveal to the High Priest what I mean to do in a time far off. ¹⁹ But all this honor to the High Priest notwithstanding, when Aaron's sons came in without permission to bring an offering to Me, I allowed them not a penny's worth of credit, but strangled ²⁰ the two young men, as is said *Then his young ones choked to death on their own blood* (Job 39:30). Nevertheless, I did not remove My glory from them, for, as the verse goes on to say, *Where the slain are, there is He (ibid.)*. His presence there is elsewhere referred to in Scripture, in the verse *Draw near, carry your brethren from before the Holiness* (Lev. 10:4), words much like those a man would say to his companions, "Come in and take away the dead from the presence of the mourner." *And*

18. See B. Yoma 53b, and Lev. Rabbah 20:4.

19. "When he watched and noticed the smoke of the altar pile rise toward the south, he knew that the south would have plenty. If it rose toward the west, he knew that the west would have plenty . . . and the like if it rose toward the other directions. But if it rose toward the middle of the sky, he knew that the whole world would enjoy plenty." See Lev. Rabbah 20:4; PRKB, 171b; Tanhuma B, 3, 60; and *Studies of the Research Institute for Hebrew Poetry*, 4 (1938), 233.

20. In execution by fire, whereby Nadab and Abihu died, strangulation is involved. See Sanh 7:1-3, and Lev. Rabbah 20:4.

it was the Lord [as mourner] who said unto Moses: "Speak unto Aaron thy brother" (Lev. 16:2).

4. A different comment: *After the death [of the two sons of Aaron . . . the Lord said unto Moses . . . With this shall Aaron come into the holy place (Lev. 16:1-3)—this standing for wise advice given to Aaron].* R. Tanhuma the son of R. Abba began his discourse by quoting the verse *For by wise advice (thblwt) thou shalt make thy war* (Prov. 24:6), and then going on to say that *thblwt* is to be read not *wise advice* but "the art of steering," a reading indicated by the verse *So the helmsman (hbl)*²¹ *came to him* (Jonah 1:6). As a ship sailing in the sea is bound to go down if it has no helmsman, so Israel—though the people be composed of host upon host, they will be unable to endure if they have no leader. Hence the words *by the art of steering* refer to Moses in his generation, Joshua in his generation, Samuel in his generation.

In another comment, the word *thblwt* is taken to mean "bundles (*hbylwt*) of meritorious deeds." No matter how many troubles come upon Israel, their meritorious deeds²² wage war in their behalf. If it were not for Israel's meritorious deeds which entered with Aaron and helped him when he entered the Holy of Holies, he would not for one instant have been able to withstand the fiery presence of the ministering angels who were there. Likewise on the Day of Atonement, the day when Aaron entered [the Holy of Holies to make atonement for Israel], Satan would appear to make accusations against Israel, but when Satan saw Aaron he would flee from his presence because of the many meritorious deeds that entered with him. The merit of the Patriarchs entered with him; and the merit of the Matriarchs entered with him; and the merit of Manasseh and Ephraim entered with him; and the merit of the Tribes entered with him;

21. The noun *thblwt* is thus derived from *hebel*, "rope," or *hogel*, "sailor, helmsman."

22. "In another comment . . . their meritorious deeds"—Parma MS; PE: "Then again 'the art of steering' refers to Aaron in his generation. No matter how many troubles come upon Israel, their leaders," etc.

and the merit of circumcision entered with him; and the merit of the Torah entered with him; and the merit of Israel entered with him.

The proof that the merit of Abraham entered with him? The verses *With this shall Aaron come into the holy place: with a bull calf* (Lev. 16:3): "And Abraham ran unto the herd, and fetched a young bull," etc. (Gen. 18:7). The words *and a ram for a burnt offering* (Lev. 16:3) intimate that the merit of Isaac entered with him: "And Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son" (Gen. 22:13). And whence do we know that the merit of Jacob also entered with him? Because it is said *And he shall take of the congregation of the children of Israel two he-goats* (Lev. 16:5), these words being an allusion to the he-goats of whom Jacob's mother said, "And fetch me from thence two good kids of the goats" (Gen. 27:9). Why did she say "good"?²³ Because, said R. Berechiah in the name of R. Ḥelbo, they will be good for you [O Jacob] and good for your children. Good for you, since you will come in and give food to your father and receive the blessings from him; and good for your children, because, although they get soiled by sin throughout the days of the year, on the Day of Atonement they can bring two he-goats, and offering these up, will be forgiven. And whence the proof that the merit of the Patriarchs also entered with the High Priest? The verse *He shall put on the holy linen tunic, and . . . the linen breeches . . . with the linen girdle, and with the linen miter* (Lev. 16:4), the four repetitions of linen pointing to Israel's lineage from the four Patriarchs.²⁴

Another comment: *With this (bz't) shall Aaron come*. R. Berechiah said: The word *bz't* has a numerical value of four hundred and ten, the letter *bet* standing for two, the *zayin* for seven, the 'alef for one, the *taw* for four hundred. Hence the

23. Apparently in this instance the author takes "good" to mean not "good in flavor" but "good in purpose."

24. "Linen . . . lineage"—the pun is meant to suggest the pun in the text: *bd* ("linen"), *bt* ("daughter"). So Mordecai Margulies in Lev. Rabbah M, p. 491.

verse intimates that the [First] Temple would stand for a span of exactly four hundred and ten years.^{24a} Are we to understand, then, from God's saying to Moses *With this shall Aaron come*, that Aaron lived four hundred and ten years? No. What the verse means is that the eighteen High Priests who were to minister during the four hundred and ten years would come in such an even succession, son following upon son, that their ministries would all be considered as one, identical, O Aaron, with thine. In this sense the verse declares: *With this shall Aaron come*. But the verse does not apply to the Second Temple, because in its time the priests used to outbid one another for the office of High Priest, so that there were eighty High Priests who served [in disorderly succession] in the Temple. Hence the first part of the verse *The fear of the Lord prolongeth days* (Prov. 10:27) applies to the priests of the First Temple, and the conclusion of the verse *the years of the wicked shall be shortened* (*ibid.*) applies to the priests of the Second Temple.

In another comment on the verse *With this shall Aaron come*, R. Isaac [returns to the subject of the meritorious deeds that entered the Holy of Holies with Aaron], saying: The merit of the Tribes entered with him, as is indicated by the twelve stones that were set in the breastplate over Aaron's heart. Just why were they there? So that at Aaron's coming into the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, the Holy One, blessed be He, would look upon them and be mindful of the merit of the Tribes. Scripture itself tells us that the stones were to serve as a reminder to God.²⁵ That the word *this* (*z't*) in the verse *With this shall Aaron come* refers to the Tribes is intimated by the close association of the word with the Tribes in the verse *All these are the twelve Tribes of Israel, and this* (*z't*) (Gen. 49:28).

Another comment: The word *this* implies that the merit of the Torah entered with him: *And this* (*z't*) *is the Torah* (Deut. 4:44).

24a. See Gerson D. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition* (Philadelphia, 1967/5728), p. 192.

25. See Exod. 28:21-29.

Another comment: The merit of Israel is implied, Israel to whom it was said *This (z't) thy stature is like to a palm tree* (Song 7:8). R. Phinehas said: Indeed Moses, who ascended on high and took the Torah captive and brought it down, was able to do so not by virtue of his own strength, but by virtue of Israel's merit, as is said *Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive, thou hast received gifts by virtue of men* (Ps. 68:19)—that is, by virtue of Israel's merit, to whom it is said *And ye My sheep, the sheep of My pasture, are men* (Ezek. 34:31).

Another comment: *With this shall Aaron come.* With the merit of Manasseh and Ephraim which entered with him. R. Josiah said: The two onyx stones which were put on the shoulders of Aaron²⁶ stood for Manasseh and Ephraim. And why onyx stones? Because the two grew up within the ranks of haughty rulers,²⁷ but did not emulate their haughty ways.

Another comment: *With this (z't) shall Aaron come.* R. Haninah the son of R. Ishmael said: The merit of circumcision entered with him: *This (z't) is My covenant, which ye shall keep* (Gen. 17:10); and it is written *My covenant was with [Aaron] of life and peace* (Mal. 2:5).²⁸

26. See Exod. 27:6-12. The onyx was Joseph's stone.

27. So Parma MS, which provides a play on the words *šhm*, "onyx," and *šhwnt*, literally "satrapy," from a Persian root. I thank Professor Saul Lieberman for this explanation. PE: "within Egypt."

28. See Exod. Rabbah 38:8.

SUMMARY

God's love of the pursued

R. Jose ben Ḥalafta was asked by a heathen why congregational offerings would not be accepted from him. The Rabbi replied by quoting the verse *Because the corruption [of the heathen] is in what they offer* (Lev. 22:25)—since they are pursuers, their cruelty would be present in their offerings (Sec. 1). But God loves the pursued—it is their innocence and mildness that are present in the bullocks, sheep, and goats offered up to Him. In showing that God loves the pursued, R. Tanḥuma cites *That which hath been is now; that which is to be hath already been; and God seeketh that which is pursued* (Eccles. 3:15). The first part of the verse is construed as a refutation of scoffers who say that it was never in God's power to have Adam live for ever; the second part of the verse is construed as a refutation of skeptics who say that God cannot bring the dead back to life; the conclusion of the verse is construed as saying that God will resurrect the heathen nations as well as Israel, in order to seek redress for persecuted Israel. *God seeketh [redress for] that which is pursued [in persecution]*.

Further comment construes *That which hath been is now* as referring to the waters which, from the beginning of creation, have been obedient to the will of God. *That which is to be hath already been* is construed as saying that the Mediterranean Sea will dry up for the return of the exiles, even as the Red Sea dried up for the Israelites departing from Egypt. *And God seeketh that which is pursued* is construed as saying that God seeks with love that which is pursued and easily overcome: not only bullocks, or sheep, or goats, but men who are innocent and mild like these (Sec. 2).

As for the spirit in which offerings are made, God says to Israel: If you bring an offering to Me of your own free will, then it is

* The use of brackets around the headings for Piskas 48–53 is explained in note 41 of the Introduction.

acceptable; but if you bring it reluctantly, then you are bringing into My presence nothing better than *an offering made for the fire* (Lev. 22:27), and not for Me. Moreover, God goes on to say to Israel: Your offerings serve your need, not Mine. I do not require them for food. If the fiery beings of My army need not eat or drink, how can My person require food? Besides, if Moses, a mere mortal, neither ate nor drank when he came up to Me, do you suppose that I require food and drink? And if I did need them, do you suppose you could meet My need? No. What little I ask of you as an offering shows that I have no need whatever of the offering as food. It is because of thy need, O man, and as a means of expiation for thee, that I request an offering, and not because I have need of food.

The words and phrases of Num. 28:3, a passage prescribing offerings to God, are taken to mean that God puts Israel's iniquities out of sight or washes Israel clean (Sec. 3). For He is ever merciful: His sun shines upon the righteous, but it also shines upon the wicked. His is a tender mercy: He does not require circumcision until the eighth day, when the infant is strong enough to endure it, and He does not accept an animal for sacrifice until it is at least eight days old, so that its dam may not suffer its loss too soon (Sec. 4).

*When a bullock, or a sheep, or
a goat is born . . . from the eighth
day and thenceforth it may be accepted for an offering
. . . unto the Lord (Lev. 22:27) ¹*

1. Let our master teach us: If a heathen brings a sacrifice [to be used as a congregational offering], may it be accepted from him? Our Masters taught as follows: Freewill offerings ² may be accepted from the heathen, but sacrifices [to be used as congregational offerings] may not be accepted from them. Why not? Because in the view of the Holy One, blessed be He, their sacrifices are blemished. As Solomon said: *The sacrifice of the*

1. Lev. 22:26 ff. was at one time the lesson for the first day of Passover. See B.Meḡ 30b.

2. Burnt offerings, meal offerings, or peace offerings.

wicked is an abomination (Prov. 21:27). On this matter consider the story of a heathen who put the following question to R. Jose ben Halafta: Why are sacrifices [meant to be used as congregational offerings] not accepted from us? Is it not written *From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name is great among the nations; and in every place offerings are presented unto My name, even pure oblations; for My name is great among the nations* (Mal. 1:11)? R. Jose replied: How is it that in reading you see only what you want to see, and do not see in reading <what you do not want to see>? Consider: When Balaam and Balak wanted to offer sacrifices to the Holy One, blessed be He, He would not accept them, as is plainly said *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams*, etc.? (Micah 6:7).³ And does not Scripture say elsewhere *Nevertheless, the Lord thy God would not hearken unto Balaam* (Deut. 23:6)? And aside from this verse and the other, does not Scripture declare, *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*? The heathen replied: "You people make Scripture say whatever you want it to say. The fact is that in the words *Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams* the prophet was talking of rams which belonged [not to Balaam and Balak but] to your kind. As for the words *The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*,⁴ they refer to wicked men in general. Thus, though a man be a Jew, if he is wicked, your God will abominate his sacrifice. What's more, don't put me off by quoting from remote corners in Scripture! Prove your point from the Pentateuch!" R. Jose replied: "As true as you are alive, the point is clearly established in a verse in the Pentateuch. Thus you find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to give the Torah to Israel, in the passage on sacrifices specifying how many years old or how many days old animal sacrifices are to be when they are offered, the Holy One, blessed be He, admonished Israel that a

3. Earlier in the chapter, in verse 5, Micah speaks of the devices of Balak and Balaam; and the question about *thousands of rams* is taken to refer to the hecatombs proffered by these two men.

4. "You people make Scripture . . . *sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination*" —Parma MS.

sacrifice [meant as a congregational offering] is not to be accepted from you heathen. The admonition is in the verse preceding the one that specifies the age of the sacrifices and is as follows: *Neither from the hand of a foreigner shall ye offer the bread of your God of any of these; because the corruption [of the heathen] is in what they offer* (Lev. 22:25). But from Israel, I accept [any animal sacrifice meant as a congregational offering], as is indicated in the lesson for the day: *When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is born,*" etc.

2. *A bullock, or a sheep, or a goat.* R. Tanhuma began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of what is said by Solomon in traditional sacred writings:⁵ *That which hath been is now . . . and God seeketh that which is pursued* (Eccles. 3:15). The words *That which hath been is now* allude to the fact that when the Holy One, blessed be He, created Adam, He created him with the intention of having him live and endure for ever like the ministering angels, for *The Lord God said: "Behold, the man is become as one of us"* (Gen. 3:22). As the ministering angels are not meant to die, neither was Adam meant to know the taste of death. Indeed R. Judah, the son of R. Simon, carries the explication of the verse still further to an idea difficult to grasp, for he takes the verse to be saying, *The man is become as the One of us*—that is, become like the Unique One of the world, who lives and endures for ever and ever. Furthermore, the Holy One, blessed be He, had intended to make Adam ruler over his world, and to set him up as king over all God's creatures in the world. "I am King in the worlds above," the Holy One, blessed be He, said, "and Adam will be king in the worlds below." So what did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He brought Adam into the Garden of Eden and made him king there, as is said *And the Lord God planted a garden . . . and there He set the man* (Gen. 2:8). Scripture does not say, "He brought the man," but says, *set the man*. What is intended by the choice of the word *set*? To indicate

5. Hebrew *Qabbalah*, i.e. the Scriptural books not in the Pentateuch.

Adam's kingship, as in the verse *Thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee* (Deut. 17:15), and in the verse *And the king . . . caused a throne to be set for the king's mother* (1 Kings 2:19). But God's intentions for Adam came to naught when Adam did not abide by the command given him, and forthwith mortality was decreed for him. Successive generations of men have had their doubts as to whether God could have carried out His intentions concerning Adam. They ask: If he had not sinned, can we believe that he would have endured for ever and ever? Can we believe that a mortal would not ever die? No, they have declared: The Holy One, blessed be He, trumped up the charges against Adam [so as to get out of a promise He could not keep].⁶

To all such doubters, the Holy One, blessed be He, has replied: Behold, is not Elijah who kept My command still living?⁷ *That which might have been [for Adam] is now!*

What is meant by the words that follow: *And that which is to be hath already been* (Eccles. 3:15)? They mean that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I have declared that in the time-to-come I will quicken the dead; but successive generations have had their doubts, saying: Can we believe that a dead man can be brought back to life? The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Why do you have doubts as to whether I shall be able to quicken the dead? Have I not already quickened the dead in this world—quicken the dead by the hand of Elijah, by the hand of Elisha, and by the hand of Ezekiel? *That which is to be [in the time-to-come] hath already been* in this world.

Since the skeptics⁸ do not acknowledge the resurrection of the dead, does this mean that in the time-to-come the Holy One, blessed be He, will not raise them up, nor raise up the heathen

6. [Literally "Successive generations of men have been wondering: Is it possible that had Adam not sinned, he would have endured for ever? Is it possible that Adam would never have died? Did the Holy One, blessed be He, trump up charges against Adam (in order to get out of His promise)?" L. N.]

7. See 2 Kings 2:11.

8. Literally "Cutheans." But in editions published under censorship, this word frequently takes the place of the word "unbeliever," "heretic," or "heathen." See Jastrow, p. 627.

nations, but will raise up only the righteous and leave the wicked alone?

The Holy One, blessed be He, answered as follows: Israel acknowledge the resurrection of the dead; but the [heathen] nations—as though it were not enough for them not to make this acknowledgement—also persecute Israel. And so the Holy One, blessed be He, went on: I will therefore resurrect the [heathen] nations of the earth as well as Israel, in order to seek redress for persecuted Israel. *And God seeketh [redress for] that which is pursued [in persecution]* (Eccles. 3:15).

So far we have had R. Nehemiah's way of expounding the verse *That which hath been is now*. But R. Judah's way is as follows:⁹ When the Holy One, blessed be He, created His world, the world was covered with waters upon waters. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He proceeded to decree that they make room in the world for other things: *God said: "Let the waters . . . be gathered together unto one place"* (Gen. 1:9). When this decree was given them, they were eager to carry out the decree of their Maker. And where did they go and gather themselves together? Into one Great Sea. And how was their gathering managed? R. Levi and our Masters differed. R. Levi said: The voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, was a setter of bounds for the waters—*The voice of the Lord is for the waters* (Ps. 29:3). But according to our Masters, the waters, seething, whispered to one another and said: Where has our Maker decreed that we go and gather ourselves? And the reply was: Into one Great Sea. *The floods have lifted up, O Lord, the floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their seething* (Ps. 93:3). What is implied by the expression *dak̄yam* ("their seething")? *Derek̄ yam*, "to the sea."

Come and see what miracles <were then performed!> As soon as the decree was given them that they go and gather into one sea, they flowed up mountains and ran down valleys, as is said *They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto*

9. "So far we have had . . . is as follows"—Parma MS; P is corrupt.

the place which Thou hast founded for them (Ps. 104:8). How did the Holy One, blessed be He, manage what He had them do? Consider: The entire world was covered with waters upon waters. Now as a matter of fact, if a man has two full bowls before him, can he empty one into the other? Indeed not! But come and see the miracles and wonders of the Holy One, blessed be He! The world was covered with waters upon waters. Nevertheless He emptied them into that which was already full. What He did may be understood by imagining bags filled with air and being put into a house until they take up the entire space in the house. What does the owner of the house do? He takes the bags, lets the air out of them, and makes them empty. Thereupon the bags can be put away in the corners of the house.

So, too, did the Holy One, blessed be He. The primeval waters covered the whole world. What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He pressed down upon them, so to speak, <and made them go and gather> into one Great Sea.¹⁰

Then, when the generation of Enosh arose and provoked Him by worshiping images of men—*Then began men to call themselves by the name of the Lord* (Gen. 4:26)¹¹—the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Let those waters, to which I uttered a decree and which carried out My decree, come and punish the generation which set aside My decree: *He summoned the waters of the sea, and poured them out upon the face of the earth* (Amos 5:8, 9:6). Thereupon the waters came and rose as high as Acco, as high as Joppa.

So, too, when the generation of the dispersion of the races of man arose and provoked Him, the Holy One, blessed be He, punished them with the waters: *So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence* (Gen. 11:8). The words *scattered them* imply that He scattered them violently amidst the waters.¹² Note that Scripture says twice in Amos, *He summoned the waters of the sea, and poured them out*: once with reference to the generation

10. Cf. MTeh 93:4.

11. See Rashi; Piska 5.7, n. 59; Piska 42.8; and Mek, 2, 240.

12. This verb in Hebrew is usually associated with water—it suggests the explosive force of a wave.

of Enosh, and once with reference to the generation of the dispersion of the races of man.

When mortals voice their doubts, saying, "Can we believe that waters came from the one Great Sea and rose up as high as Acco and as high as Joppa?" the Holy One, blessed be He, replies: "O ye fools! Do you have your doubts about what befell the generation of the Tower of Babel? Behold, did not the same thing befall the generation of Enosh?"¹³ *That which hath been is now.*

And that which is to be hath already been. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I shall dry up the Mediterranean Sea for the return of the exiles. And the proof? So it is written: *The Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian Sea; and with His scorching wind will He shake His hand over the River; and will smite it into seven streams, and cause men to march over dry-shod* (Isa. 11:15). And for their sake He will divide the River into pathways. And the proof? So it is written: *There shall be a highway for the remnant of His people* (Isa. 11:16). But mortals voice their doubts, saying, "Can God do such a thing?" The Holy One, blessed be He, answers: And have I not already done such a thing in this world when the Israelites went out of Egypt? *And that which is to be hath already been.* Did I not divide the Red Sea and make it into separate paths for them—*To Him who divided the Red Sea into paths* (Ps. 136:13)—and [at the same time] sink the Israelites' pursuers in it?

And God seeketh that which is pursued. The Holy One, blessed be He, [says]: I always love the pursued and hate the pursuers, as when Ishmael pursued his brother Isaac—*And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian . . . making sport* (Gen. 21:9). Because Ishmael shot arrows at Isaac—*As one who makes sport by shooting deadly arrows*¹⁴ . . . and saith, "Am not I in sport?" (Prov. 26:18-19)—the Holy One, blessed be

13. See Piska 42-7.

14. So Ehrlich and Kahana, as quoted in Julius H. Greenstone, *Proverbs with Commentary* (Philadelphia, 1950). JV: *As a madman who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death.*

He, loved Isaac, saying to Abraham *Take now thy son* (Gen. 22:2). Our father Abraham replied: I have two sons. Thou hast given me Isaac and Ishmael. God said: *Thine only son* (*ibid.*). Abraham replied: Both are only sons; Isaac is an only son to Sarah and Ishmael an only son to Hagar. God said: *Whom thou lovest* (*ibid.*). Abraham replied: Are there different areas of love within a man—one of more love for one son and one of less love for the other? I love both of them. God declared: *Even Isaac*—for it is Isaac I love because he is pursued.

When Esau relentlessly pursued Jacob—*Because he did pursue his brother with the sword, and did cast off all pity* (Amos 1:11)—the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I love the pursued and hate the pursuer: *Esau I hated* (Mal. 1:3), but Jacob—*I loved Jacob* (Mal. 1:2). Why? Because *God seeketh [with love] that which is pursued*.

David was pursued—Saul pursued him. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: I love him that is pursued and hate the pursuer. Hence God said to Saul: *The Lord hath rent the kingdom of Israel from thee . . . and hath given it to a neighbor of thine* (1 Sam. 15:28)—that is, to David. Because *God seeketh [with love] that which is pursued*.

Thus you see that the Holy One, blessed be He, loves those among the children of men who are pursued. Whence do we know He feels the same way about birds and cattle? You find that when the Holy One, blessed be He, spoke to Moses about the offerings, Moses supposed that he would be asked to offer up peacocks, or pheasants, or geese. However these were not what God asked of him. As Scripture says, *If his offering to the Lord be a burnt offering of fowls, then he shall bring his offering of turtledoves, or of young pigeons* (Lev. 1:14),¹⁵ of which the

15. Parma MS concludes this paragraph as follows: "Furthermore, in speaking of what is required *for the leper's offering* (Lev. 14:8), Scripture specifies two birds, indicated by the dietary laws as fit for food, because each has a powerful adversary in pursuit of it. For example? The hawk pursues turtle-doves, pigeons, and all kinds of birds specified by the dietary laws as being fit for food. Therefore the Holy One, blessed be He, says: Seeing that they are pursued, they are the ones I would seek out. And since the lion pursues the bullock, the wolf pursues

Holy One, blessed be He, said: Because they are pursued, I would have an offering of them. *God seeketh [with love] that which is pursued* [and easily overcome]: a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat.

3. <Another comment:> *A bullock, or a sheep, or a goat*, etc. (Lev. 22:27). Scripture does not go on to say of these "for an offering unto the Lord," but says *for an offering made for the fire*. What is implied by the phrase *made for the fire*? That the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: If you bring an offering to Me of your own free will, behold, then, it is an acceptable offering; but if you bring offerings reluctantly, with a sense of duress, I impute it to you that you are bringing into My presence nothing better than *an offering made for the fire*.

Command the children of Israel, and say unto them, etc. (Num. 28:2). The text does not go on to say, "My food which is presented unto Me for a sweet savor unto Me," but says, *My food which is presented unto Me for offerings made for the fire, or for a sweet savor unto Me*. What is meant by the words *made for the fire*? That the Holy One, blessed be He, says: If you bring to Me an offering of your own free will and with love, behold, then, it is an acceptable offering to Me; but if you bring it with a sense of duress, then it is *made for the fire*—it is not Mine.¹⁶

In another comment, the words previously read *made for the fire* are read *from My fiery beings*¹⁷ (Num. 28:2). The Holy One, blessed be He, says: My son, let not thine Impulse to evil lead thee astray by saying, "He is always giving us commands concerning sacrifices simply because His person requires food."

the lamb, the leopard pursues the goat, the Holy One, blessed be He, says: Those that are pursued by others—they are the ones I seek out for an offering. *God seeketh [with love] that which is pursued*: a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat.

16. See Tos Men 7:9.

17. Literally "the word is to be rendered 'for My fires.'" In the parallel in Num. Rabbah 21:16, *l'iy*, "for My fires," seems to be regarded as a portmanteau word containing within itself the phrase *l'mad me-'iṣṣay*, "draw the right inference from My fiery beings."

If My person required food, would I be seeking it of thee? *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee* (Ps. 50:12). And if the Impulse to evil so leads thee astray as to give thee the notion that My person requires food, then draw the right inference from "My fiery beings"—from My army, all of which is fire. How many ten thousand times ten thousand stand before Me! *A fiery stream issued and came forth from before Him; thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand* (Dan. 7:10). How many such fiery beings are renewed every morning day after day, beings who neither eat nor drink! When thou eatest not or drinkest not, thou diest; these do not eat and do not drink, yet they do not know the taste of death. Why not? Because they look upon the likeness of My glory and draw sustenance from the splendor of the Presence, even though, as I have said, they cannot directly look upon My glory. According to R. Isaac, the fiery beings see God's glory as through a veil. *In the light of the King's countenance is life* (Prov. 16:15). *Thou art the Lord, even Thou alone . . . and Thou art sustenance*¹⁸ *for them all* (Neh. 9:6). Now if the fiery beings of My army need neither eat nor drink merely because they see no more than the likeness of My glory—how can My person require food? If food be required by My person, dost thou think that I would tell thee? *If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof* (Ps. 50:12).

In another comment, the verse in Psalms is read *If I were hungry, would it not have been said to thee* [that My person required food]? Scripture seems to say so, said Resh Lakish, quoting the verse *It is to be a continual burnt offering [like that] which was "made" on Mount Sinai* (Num. 28:6). But can it be said that on Mount Sinai an offering was made? No. [The "offering" was in fact Israel's resolve to heed God's words]. Consequently in the Psalm the Holy One, blessed be He, is to be understood as saying: "Shouldst thou mistakenly think that the verse in Numbers carries an intimation of My person's requir-

18. I follow Friedmann's suggestion (see his note) that in this comment the word is read *miḥyah*, "sustenance," and not *mēḥayyeh*, "sustainest."

ng food, then call to mind Moses who came up to Mount Sinai and stayed with Me forty day and forty nights, Moses who can come and bear witness, therefore, as to whether My person requires food." As Scripture says, *And [Moses] was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; He [God] did neither eat bread nor drink water* (Exod. 34:28). Hence *If I were hungry, would it not have been said to thee* [by Moses who was with Me that My person required food]?

Another comment: When Moses was among you, he ate and drank; but when he came up to Me, he neither ate nor drank for forty days and forty nights: *And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread nor drink water*. Now if he, a mortal, in need of eating and drinking, neither ate nor drank when he came up to Me, do you suppose that My person requires eating and drinking? And even if My person did require such, I would not appeal to thee: *If I were hungry, I would not appeal to thee, for the world is Mine, and the fullness thereof*.

Another comment: *If I were hungry, I would not appeal to thee*. Even if My person required food, I would not appeal to thee. Why not? Because I am merciful, and thou art cruel. As Resh Lakish said: The Holy One, blessed be He, has thirteen attributes of mercy: *The Lord, the Lord, God, merciful and gracious . . . forgiving . . . sin, and clearing [those who repent]*¹⁹ (Exod. 34:6-7). Since I am merciful and thou art cruel, would I entrust the providing of My food to the hands of one who is cruel? Even if My person required food, would I appeal to thee? *If I were hungry, I would not appeal to thee*.

In another comment, the verse in Psalms is read *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance] of thee*. According to R. Hiyya bar Abin, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Do I, the Offerer, require an offering? *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance] of thee [who art My creature]*. Why not? Come and see. Since My creatures do not require for their sustenance the things which in accordance with My command they create,

19. See Onkelos and Rashi.

do I require that thou shouldst make an offering of food to Me? Hast thou ever in all thy life heard anyone say, "Let us give this vine some wine to drink, that it may produce more wine," or "Let us give the olive tree some oil to drink, that it may produce more oil"? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If My creatures do not require for their sustenance the things which in accordance with My command they create, do I then require thee for My sustenance, thee whom I created?

Another comment: *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance] of thee.* The Holy One, blessed be He, said: And if I did wish to eat, would you be able to supply Me? For a mortal king requiring more than usual, you could not manage to provide as much food as he wished: *Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour . . . beside harts* (1 Kings 5:2-3). Even to supply the unique person who having been a captive²⁰ once was content with less than usual, so that all he asked for was *that which was prepared for one day, one ox and six choice sheep*, etc.²¹ (Neh. 5:18)—even to supply him was troublesome for you. Now if for flesh-and-blood like yourselves you could not manage to provide sustenance—if not for them, could you possibly expect to provide sustenance for Me? *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance of] thee.*

Another comment: *If I were hungry*, etc. And if I were to wish for sustenance, could you manage to provide Me with even enough to drink? In this connection Resh Lakish said in the name of R. Yannai: A strong man, if he has been walking along the road and thirsts for water, will drink no fewer than ten handfuls. And so, as it seems to me, the Holy One, blessed be He, might say: And for Me, who held in the hollow of My hand all the waters of creation, as is said *Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand*, etc.? (Isa. 40:12)—for Me, couldst thou manage to provide enough to drink?

[As to the drink God really requires of you], come and see

20. See Piska 16, n. 26.

21. Nehemiah went on to say, *I demanded not the bread of the governor, because the service was heavy upon this people.*

what Scripture says: *And their drink offerings shall be half a hin of wine for a bullock . . . and the fourth part of a hin for a lamb* (Num. 28:14). Now how much is a *hin*? It is a mere twelve *log*,²² and yet I require of thee that with thy offering of a lamb thou shouldst bring only three *log* and with thy offering of a ram only four *log*. So little a drink, and yet I deem it so much! For note how Scripture, in the verse just preceding the one quoted above, speaks of the drink: *In the holy place shalt thou pour out a drink offering of filling, intoxicating drink unto the Lord* (Num. 28:7). Not because I had need of it did I command thee to bring an offering to Me, but because of thy need and as a means of expiation for thee did I command it:²³ *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance] of thee.*

The Holy One, blessed be He, went on to say: And if I had need of thy offering, would I not have told thee to fetch thousands of rams at one time, ten thousand rivers of oil at one time? Have I not instead said that thou art to present an offering in keeping with thy means—only one *bullock, or sheep, or goat*. And of this one, it is required that only the blood be offered up to Me: *And the blood thereof shall be dashed against the base of the altar*²⁴ (Lev. 7:2). R. Samuel said in the name of R. Simeon ben Yoḥai: Come and see what this command signifies. Ordinarily blood is a thing despised—it is the food of dogs. And yet the Holy One, blessed be He, says that it should be offered up on the altar! However, the Holy One, blessed be He—if one dare impute such a request to Him—said: Bring Me an offering and take its blood and dash the blood against the corners of the altar that blood may expiate for blood [thou hast shed]. It is because of thy need and as a means of expiation for thee that I request an offering, and not because I wish to eat. Hence the verse is to be read *I hungry? No—the offering I request is for thy sake, [not for Mine]*.

Another comment: *If I were hungry*, etc. I, [says God], have

22. A liquid measure equal to the contents of six eggs.

23. "Not because I had need . . . command it"—Parma MS.

24. MT: *against the altar*.

a unique creature whom I made for thy sustenance in the time-to-come—it is the Behemoth who requires for his daily sustenance the produce of a thousand mountains: *The Behemoth*²⁵ *upon a thousand hills* (Ps. 50:10). How does he drink? Some say: His head is opposite the mouth of the Jordan, his mouth is directly against it, so that the Jordan pours into his mouth and thus he drinks its waters. And some say that all the water the Jordan gathers up in six months, he swallows in a single draught, for it is said of him, *He is confident that the Jordan will rush forth into his mouth*²⁶ (Job 40:23). Of him the Holy One, blessed be He, says: Canst thou feed him for a single night? *Will he abide by thy crib?* (Job 39:9). And if the creature that I made as food for thee had need of sustenance from thee, and thou couldst not provide it, how couldst thou provide Me with sustenance? *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance] of thee.*

Another comment: *If I were hungry*, etc. I intended Leviathan to be sustenance for thee in the time-to-come. But if it were necessary for thee to feed him, thou wouldst be unable to provide for him. So huge is he, our Masters taught, that were he not lying upon the deep and pressing down upon it, the deep would come up and destroy the world by flooding it. And when Leviathan wishes to drink, since he cannot drink the waters of the Ocean because they are salty, what does he do? He lifts one of his fins, and the fresh water of the deep comes up and he drinks. After he drinks, he lowers his fin back into its place and stops up the deep. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: What I intended to be sustenance for thee, thou couldst never feed. How couldst thou expect to feed Me—provide sustenance for Me? *If I were hungry, I would not ask [sustenance] of thee.*

Another comment: *If I were hungry, I would*, etc. *for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof* (Ps. 50:12). What is the connection between the conclusion and the beginning of the verse? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: If I wished food, I

25. JV: *The cattle.*

26. Since Scripture says *will rush forth*, it implies the rainy season when the Jordan is full.

have those I can appeal to²⁷—*the world is Mine and the fullness thereof*: of My ministers and the angels nearest Me, I would rightly have expected that they would bring offerings to Me.²⁸ Speak to them if you like and ask them whether they bring offerings to Me. Ask, *Who in the skies lays in order*²⁹ *to the Lord?* (Ps. 89:7). What is meant by the words *lays in order*? According to R. Eleazar the son of R. Simeon, they mean, Who lays out in its proper order an offering before Me in heaven? The sense of the verb is the same as in the verse "And the priest shall lay them in order on the wood" (Lev. 1:12). Hence, *Who in the skies lays in order to the Lord?* No one, though I could turn to My ministers and the angels nearest Me and with propriety ask of them that they bring offerings to Me.³⁰ Accordingly, it is not because My person would ever ask sustenance of thee that I told thee to bring an offering. I told thee to do so only as a means of expiation for thee and for thine honor's sake.

Another comment: *If I were hungry*, etc. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Upon thy life, it is not that I need thine offering for My sustenance: it is on account of thine iniquities. How art thou to know that it is on account of thine iniquities? Because, as you find in Scripture, only two lambs (*ķēḇašim*) were offered every day: *The one lamb shalt thou offer in the morning, and the other lamb shalt thou offer at dusk* (Num. 28:4). Now what is meant by *ķēḇašim*? The disciples of Sham-mai read *ķēḇašim* as though it were written *ķabbašim*, "they that put out of sight." That is, the daily offering of the lambs signifies

27. "I have those I can appeal to"—Parma MS; FT: "would I have had to appeal to thee?"

28. The words *for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof*, which follow in Parma MS and P, are deleted, as in FT.

29. The word 'rķ may mean "lays in order" or "may be compared."

30. The four words of Ps. 89:7b, which follow in Parma MS, are deleted with FT as unintelligible. However, these four words, rendered in JV, *Who among the sons of might can be likened (dmh) unto the Lord*, may be retained if construed in one of two ways which follow: (1) [*with propriety*] *it might be supposed (dmh in the sense of "think") that the Lord would turn to the angels*; or (2) *Blood (dmh as a verbal form of dm, "blood") offerings to the Lord would [with propriety] be brought by the angels.*

that Israel's iniquities are put out of sight by God, as the verse tells us *He will again have compassion upon us; He will suppress* (*yikboš*) *our iniquities* (Micah 7:19). On the other hand, the disciples of Hillel said: You ask what is signified by *kēḥašim*. If it signifies, as you, the disciples of Shammai, would have it, that the offerings of the lambs only suppress the iniquities, then the iniquities continue to exist right up to the present. Say, rather, that the word *kēḥašim* is to be read *kabbasim*, "they that wash clean"—that is, the lambs brought as offerings wash Israel clean. Truly, by the merit of the lamb offerings, Israel's iniquities are washed clean and made white. As one may read in Scripture: *O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness* (Jer. 4:14), *For though thou wash thee with niter . . . yet thine iniquity is marked before Me* (Jer. 2:22). [On the other hand, even a leper, when pronounced clean by the word of God, need do no more than] *wash his clothes, and be clean* (Lev. 13:6). "Wash clean"—that is what *kabbasim* signifies.³¹

What is meant by referring to the he-lambs as *of the first year* (Num. 28:3)? That God said to Israel: It is on account of the offerings, the he-lambs offered as sacrifices to Me, that I forgive your sins, so that to Me you become like an infant in its first year of life, an infant without sin: such is the sense of Scripture's saying of Saul that he *was a year old when he began to reign*³² (1 Sam. 13:1). But is it possible that Saul was only a year old when he became king? No—what is meant is that he was as innocent of iniquity as a one-year-old infant. All the foregoing discourse is suggested by meditation on the words *He-lambs of the first year without blemish* (Num. 28:3).

Without blemish. How is the phrase *without blemish* to be construed in this context except as an allusion to the Patriarchs? For example, to Abraham, who was told *Walk before Me, and be thou perfect* (Gen. 17:1). Isaac also was perfect. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Was there ever a son more perfect than he? Though he knew that his father was going to of-

31. Cf. Piska 16.7.

32. JV: *Saul was—years old when he began to reign* (the number of years is omitted in the Hebrew text).

fer him up, yet he went with him in wholeness of heart: *And they went both of them together* (Gen. 22:8). Jacob also was perfect: *Jacob was a perfect man* (Gen. 25:27). These allusions are all intimated in the description of the he-lambs as being *without blemish*.

What is intended by the words *two with the day*³³ [in the verse *He-lambs . . . two with the day for a continual burnt offering*] (Num. 28:3)? That the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: Because of the two lambs which you offer [on the northeast and southwest corners of the altar, respectively], there is special merit for you, for these two offerings go *with the day*—that is, they are in accord with the sun's course [from the northeast at dawn to the southwest at dusk].³⁴

What else is meant by the words *with the day*? That [because of the daily offering of the lambs] I will make your faces shine in the time-to-come, shine on the great day when *They that love Him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might* (Judg. 5:31).

Reprove not a scorner, lest he hate thee . . . Give to a wise man, and he will be yet wiser (Prov. 9:8-9). *O My people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee?* (Micah 6:3). *The Righteous regardeth the life of His beast* (Prov. 12:10).³⁵

33. So literally; JV: *two day by day*. This expression is considered available for special exposition, inasmuch as the next verse speaks of one lamb to be offered in the morning and another at dusk.

34. See Piska 16.7 and Sif Num. 142. On the other hand, in Tam 4:1 it is said that in the morning the lamb is to be offered on the northwest corner of the altar, and at dusk on the northeast corner—opposite to the sun's course.

35. In his n. 47 Friedmann explains that each of the three verses is cited in allusion to a particular principle implicit in the command *When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is born, then it shall be seven days under the dam; but from the eighth day and thenceforth it may be accepted for an offering . . . And . . . ye shall not kill it and its young both in one day* (Lev. 22:27-28).

The first of the three verses alludes to Noah's action with regard to the principle of offering up animals specified by the dietary laws as being fit for food, animals such as bullocks, sheep, or goats. At the time of the flood, more of these were to be saved than of those which according to the dietary laws were not fit for food (Gen. 7:2). Noah wisely surmised that because God desired the former to be brought as offerings to Him (see Exod. Rabbah 50:2), He ordered more of them to be spared, so as not to make the finding of sacrifices

4. Another comment: *A bullock, or a sheep, or a goat* (Lev. 22:27). These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works* (Ps. 145:9). R. Joshua the Priest the son of R. Nehemiah said: In all your life have you ever seen rain come down upon the field of So-and-so who is righteous, but not upon the adjacent field of So-and-so who is wicked? Of course the sun shines upon those in Israel who are righteous, but it also shines upon those who are wicked, just as the Lord causes the sun to shine upon Israel and also causes it to shine upon the [heathen] nations. Hence, *The Lord is good to all*, etc.

The Rabbis say: It is possible that a man be cruel to his servants but kind to his animals, or cruel to his animals but kind to his servants. But of the Holy One, blessed be He, it is known that even as His tender mercies are over men, so His tender mercies are over animals. Concerning man, it is said *In the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised* (Lev. 12:3); and concerning animals, it is said *From the eighth day and thenceforth it may be accepted for an offering*³⁶ (Lev. 22:27), as is stated in the verse *When a bullock, or a sheep, or a goat is born, then it shall be seven days under the dam; but from the eighth day and thenceforth it may be accepted for an offering made by fire unto the Lord* (Lev. 22:27).

too difficult. Hence to Noah apply the words *Give to a wise man and he will be yet wiser*.

The second verse alludes to the principle that of the ten species of animals fit for food according to the dietary laws, only the three which are domesticated need be offered up (see Piska 16.1, and Lev. Rabbah 27:6), in order not to make the finding of sacrifices too difficult, in the spirit of *O My people . . . wherein have I wearied thee?*

The third verse alludes to the principle that God sought to spare the dam as much as possible (see Lev. Rabbah 27:11), in keeping with *The Righteous regardeth the life of His beast*.

36. God's mercy is implied in these two verses, for He does not require circumcision until the eighth day when the infant is strong enough to endure it, and He does not accept an animal for sacrifice until it is at least eight days old, so that its dam may not suffer its loss too soon.

SUMMARY

The smiting of the Egyptian first-born on the midnight of Passover

There are set times for the morning *Tēfillah* and for the afternoon *Tēfillah*, but not for the evening *Tēfillah* which may be recited any time during the night. David chose to say the evening *Tēfillah* at midnight, because miraculous deliverances for Israel took place at midnight (Sec. 1).

When he awoke at midnight, he would take up his harp and strike a chord. Thereupon all who labored diligently in the Torah used to rise from their sleep and give themselves over to studying Torah.

At midnight also, David used to thank God because Boaz restrained his passion for Ruth; had he not, David's origin would have been a blemished one. He also used to thank God for the permission given to his Moabite ancestress to be married to an Israelite, and for His smiting at midnight the first-born of the Egyptians and His sparing of the first-born of the Israelites (Sec. 2). It is to be noted that He smote the Egyptians only after His effort to cleanse them of evil had failed (Sec. 3), and He showed mercy to Israel, even though they had no meritorious deeds to their credit (Sec. 4).

The smiting of the first-born took place in the exact middle of the first night of Passover, because many years before, on the same night of the same month, Abraham went forth to war against the four kings who had invaded Canaan (Sec. 5).

The statement in Exod. 11:4 that God would *go out into the midst of Egypt* is explained (Sec. 6), and the meaning of "first-born" is given exact and extended definition (Sec. 7). When the first-born of the Egyptians heard Moses say that they would die and saw their own fathers abandon them to their fate, they slew sixty myriads of their fathers.

God's use of the plagues against the Egyptians was the tactics of

an army general—He cut off the enemy's water, dug trenches, concentrated His troops, used siege guns, and finally overcame them (Sec. 8). As God requited the Egyptians, so will He requite the Romans (Sec. 9).

God's requital of the Egyptians came at night, it is said, because the Egyptians did not relax their bondage of Israel even at night (Sec. 10). It is also said that God smote the Egyptians at midnight because it was Moses who specified midnight as the time of smiting (Sec. 11).

*And it came to pass at midnight,
that the Lord smote all the first-born
in the land of Egypt, etc. (Exod. 12:29).¹*

1. Let our master teach us: Till what time may the evening *Tēfillah* be recited? Our Masters taught as follows: "There is no set time for the evening *Tēfillah*" (Ber 4:1); at any time [during the night], when a man wishes to recite the *Tēfillah*, he may recite it.² Why is this question raised? Because the times for reciting the morning *Tēfillah* and the afternoon *Tēfillah* are set times.

In regard to the following question asked of R. Samuel bar R. Nahman by R. Hanina bar Papa, "What is implied by the words *Thou hast covered Thyself with a cloud, that our prayer (Tēfillah) should not pass through* (Lam. 3:44)?" R. Samuel bar R. Nahman in his reply made reference to the matter in hand by saying: "The implication of the verse is that only the times for saying the [morning and the afternoon] *Tēfillah* are set times." Hence David said: *But as for me, let my prayer (Tēfillah) be unto Thee, O Lord, in an acceptable time* (Ps. 69:14), at a time, that is, when the gates of prayer are open.

1. See Piska 17, n. 1.

2. "There was no public sacrifice to which the evening *Tēfillah* could correspond. When originally instituted, the latter was thus in a sense optional, but by force of general custom it came in the course of time to be regarded as obligatory. Because of its optional character the Mishnah fixes no time for the recital of the evening *Tēfillah*." *The Mishnah: Berakoth, Peah, Demai*, ed. Harry Fischel Institute (New York, 5707/1947), p. 27. See also B.Ber 27b.

Abba Saul used to suggest with regard to any *Tēfillah* that a man ought to prepare his heart beforehand for the *Tēfillah*, so as to be assured that his prayer would be heard, for it is said *Thou wilt direct their heart, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to attend* (Ps. 10:17).

David said: Since there are set times for the morning and afternoon *Tēfillahs*, I shall not depart from my own practice of saying the evening *Tēfillah* at midnight, as is said *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous judgments* (Ps. 119:62). By this he meant: It is at midnight that we are obliged to thank Thee for the miracles Thou didst perform for us at midnight, when Thou didst slay the first-born of Egypt and other foes as well. Sennacherib—Thou didst requite him at midnight, as is said *And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went forth, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians*, etc. (2 Kings 19:35). Belshazzar—Thou didst requite him at midnight: *In that night Belshazzar the Chaldean king was slain* (Dan. 5:30). The Egyptians also—the Holy One, blessed be He, requited them at midnight. And the proof? That which we read in the lesson for the day: *And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord smote all the first-born*.

2. *And it came to pass at midnight*. R. Tanḥuma began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of David's saying *At midnight I will rise*, etc. (Ps. 119:62), whereby David's excellence is revealed. For he used to give thanks to the Holy One, blessed be He, every day and every hour—indeed not only during the day, but at midnight as well: *At midnight I will rise*, etc.

R. Phinehas the Priest ben Ḥama used to say in the name of R. Eleazar ben Menahem: When David went to sleep at night, he would hang a harp over his bed and then would awake at midnight, take the harp and strike a chord on it. Thereupon all those who labored diligently in the Torah used to rise from their sleep and give themselves over to studying Torah. They used to say: If king David rises from his sleep, should we not also rise?

Accordingly, in saying *Awake, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp; I will awake the dawn* (Ps. 57:9), David meant: Usually the dawn awakes men, but I awake the dawn.

In another comment, the verse *At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee because of Thy righteous ordinances* (Ps. 119:62) is read *Because of what happened at midnight I rise to give thanks unto Thee for [Thy] decrees, also for Thy liberality.*³ David said: Master of the world, I give Thee thanks for the midnight when Thou didst aid my grandmother Ruth, as is said *And it came to pass at midnight that the man was shaken [by desire for Ruth], indeed [his organ] became as hard as a turnip*⁴ (Ruth 3:8).

The verse concludes with *for [Thy] decrees, also for Thy liberality*. If God utters decrees, how can David speak of His liberality? And if David speaks of His liberality, how can he speak of His decrees? What David meant, however, was this: *Thanks . . . for [Thy] decrees*, such as Thou didst set down in the Torah: *An Ammonite or a Moabite shall not enter into the assembly of the Lord* (Deut. 23:4). What did David mean by *liberality*? He meant: For my sake Thou didst evince liberality in saying that [the prohibition to marry Israelites applies to] an Ammonite man but not to an Ammonite woman, to a Moabite man but not to a Moabite woman.⁵

In another comment, the words are read *Because of what happened at midnight I rise to give thanks unto Thee for [Thy] judgments and for Thy mercy* (Ps. 119:62)—for that midnight when Thou didst slay the first-born in Egypt: *And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord smote*, etc. (Exod. 12:29). The verse in the Psalm goes on to say, *for [Thy] judgments and for Thy mercy*: Thou didst show mercy to Israel, for Thou didst bring them out of Egypt and Thou didst execute judgments

3. See Piska 17.3, n. 8.

4. The verb *lft* is taken by the commentator to be derived from *lft*, "turnip." Had Boaz given in to his passion, David's origin would have been a blemished one. See Piska 17.3, and B.Sanh 19b. JV: *the man was startled, and turned himself*.

5. See Piska 29/30A.1, and Yeb 8:3.

upon the Egyptians, for Thou didst slay their first-born: *And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord smote, etc.*

3. Another comment: *And it came to pass at midnight.* These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *With lashings that wound Thou wouldst have cleansed away evil, but finally [Thou didst cleanse it away] with the smiting [of that which comes out] of the innermost parts of the belly*⁶ (Prov. 20:30). Despite all the lashings of punishment which the Holy One, blessed be He, inflicted upon the Egyptians in order to cleanse them of evil, so that the Egyptians would let Israel go from their midst—*With lashings that wound Thou wouldst have cleansed away evil*—the Egyptians did not consent to let them go. When did they let them go? After *the smiting [of that which comes out] of the innermost parts of the belly*—that is, after the smiting of the first-born: *And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord smote all the first-born, etc.*

4. Another comment: *And it came to pass at midnight* (Exod. 12:29). R. Tanhuma began his discourse as follows: These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *In a moment they died, and at midnight; thereupon the people, deeply agitated, marched out. Were not [the Egyptians] forewarned*⁷ *by the Mighty One, so that He would not have to use a punishing hand?*⁸ (Job 34:20a-b). This verse alludes to the smiting of the first-born of Egypt whom the Holy One, blessed be He, smote all in a moment, so that, as Scripture says, *In a moment they died, and at midnight.* How long is a moment? The blink of an eye, according to R. Abin the Levite Berabbi. The next words in the verse, *thereupon the people, deeply agitated, marched out*, refer to the people of Israel who in deep agitation marched out and departed from Egypt. With the words *Were not [the*

6. JV: *Sharp wounds cleanse away evil; so do stripes that reach the inward parts.*

7. The word *swr*, "take away, put aside," is read as though spelled *twr* and equated with *trh*, "forewarn."

8. JV: *and the mighty are taken away without hand.*

Egyptians] forewarned by the Mighty One, so that He would not have to use a punishing hand? the Holy One, blessed be He, was asking: Did I not warn them time after time to let My children go? But they would not, though I warned them, saying *If thou wilt not let My people go* (Exod. 8:17), and admonished them, saying *How long wilt thou refuse to humble thyself before Me?* (Exod. 10:3).

In another comment, the words in Job are read *They put aside [their awareness of] the Mighty One; they had no [merits] in hand* (Job 34:20b). The discourse on this reading applies to all of Israel, for it is intimated that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I showed mercy to Israel when I brought them forth out of Egypt, even though they had no meritorious deeds to their credit; as Scripture says, *They put aside [their awareness of] the Mighty One; they had no [merits] in hand*. Exactly when did the Holy One, blessed be He, show mercy to Israel? In the night of the smiting of the first-born: *And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord smote*, etc.

5. In a further comment on *And it came to pass at midnight* (Exod. 12:29), another verse, *And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord: About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt* (Exod. 11:4), is cited as relevant. What is to be inferred from this verse? No more than that Moses, since he was flesh-and-blood and flesh-and-blood cannot tell the exact moment when midnight falls, had to say, *About midnight*—more or less. But the Holy One, blessed be He, who created the night, He knows the precise duration of its 'eṭs and its reḡa's,⁹ and therefore He knew the moment when midnight fell. Hence in the verse quoted earlier, Scripture is to be understood as saying *And it came to pass in the exact middle of the night* (Exod. 12:29).

In another comment, the verse previously read *And Moses said, Thus saith the Lord*, etc. is to be read *And Moses said*,

9. An 'eṭ is one twenty-fourth part of an 'onah which is one twenty-fourth part of an hour; a reḡa' is one twenty-fourth part of an 'eṭ. See Piska 17.4.

My "So," saith the Lord: On the same midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt¹⁰ (Exod. 11:4). R. Aḥa taught in the name of R. Ḥelbo that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: The time of fulfilling the "So," the pledge which I made to Abraham when I said, [*As numerous as the stars*], so shall thy seed be (Gen. 15:5), has arrived. For the time when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham, "So shall thy seed be," was the fifteenth day of Nisan—[specifically, it was the first night of Passover].¹¹ It followed close upon the time when the kings came and led Lot, Abraham's kinsman, whom they took to be Abraham, into captivity, and Abraham went and saved him from the kings. What does Scripture say of this occasion? That *The night was divided for [Abraham and his household]* (Gen. 14:15), that is, say our Masters, it was the Holy One, blessed be He, who divided the night; but according to R. Benjamin bar Japheth citing R. Johanan, the night divided itself, as is implied in the impersonal statement *And the night was divided for them*. Our Masters, [disregarding the impersonal implication in the syntax of the verse], maintain that on that night the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Abraham, "Thou didst labor with Me in the slaying of the kings until half the night was gone. Upon thy life, [in the middle of the night] I will impose punishment in behalf of thy children in Egypt." Thus it is said *And it came to pass in the middle of the night*.

And [Abraham] pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus (Gen. 14:15). According to R. Levi, <citing> R. Eleazar who had it from R. Jose ben Zimra, each of

10. The sense of the verse is as follows: My "So," saith the Lord, which was the pledge I made on the night of the fifteenth of Nisan to Abraham, I am about to fulfill for his children, when I go out on the same midnight of the month into the midst of Egypt.

11. The "So," God's pledge to Abraham (Gen. 15:1-8), is thus understood as having taken place directly after the battle against the four kings. See Targum Jonathan on Gen. 14:13.

In Gen. 15:9-17, however, the covenant pledged upon the halves of a heifer is construed as having taken place when Abraham was 70 years old, five years before he left Haran to go to the land of Canaan. See Piska 42.3, n. 14.

Abraham's steps was three miles long.¹² According to R. Judah ben R. Simon, each step was a mile long. According to R. Wehunya citing R. Wehunya¹³ son of R. Benaiah, in the pursuit no dust whatsoever collected on the feet of any one of Abraham's host, as is said *He pursueth them, and passeth on safely;*¹⁴ *the way with his feet he treadeth not* (Isa. 41:3).

Accordingly God said to Abraham: In My behalf thou didst labor until half the night was gone, and hence, upon thy life, in behalf of thy children, midway through the night—in the exact middle of the night—I shall inflict punishment upon the Egyptians.

6. *And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord smote, etc.* (Exod. 12:29). In another passage Scripture says, *About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt* (Exod. 11:4). But how can it be said of the Holy One, blessed be He, that He goes out, as if a step at a time, He of whom it is said [*In one step*], *Thou didst march through the earth in indignation* (Hab. 3:12)? God's saying *will I go out* is to be explained, however, says Rabbi [Judah], in terms of a man who has paid a note in full

12. The commentators come to the conclusion that Abraham's steps were gigantic by a reasoning which may be set forth as follows: On the afternoon of the fourteenth of Nisan, Og, who brought to Abraham the tidings of the capture of Lot, found Abraham in his home in Hebron baking matzoth. During the night which followed, that is, the night of the fifteenth of Nisan, the four kings who had invaded Canaan were discomfited by Abraham. But how did Abraham manage within a few hours to come up all the way to Damascus, unless it be assumed that his every step covered a considerable distance? Cf. MTeh 110:2, and 136:12.

13. Parma MS: "R. Ahunya citing R. Ahunya."

14. Since Isa. 41 is construed by commentators as alluding to different phases in Abraham's life (see MTeh 110:1-2), the particular verse cited is interpreted as describing Abraham's pursuit of the four kings. Now, as R. Levi sees it, Isa. 41:3 contradicts itself. For if Abraham is described as pursuing the four kings, how can the verse be saying simultaneously that Abraham passes on safely beyond them? Therefore, concludes R. Levi, *šlum* is to be construed not as "safely" but as a portmanteau word containing within itself the phrase *šlūš myl*, "three miles," that being the length of each of Abraham's steps. R. Levi thus reads Isa. 41:3 as follows: *He pursueth them as he traverseth [at a speed of] three miles [a step]*. Cf. Gen. Rabbah 43:15.

and so goes out free with no further obligation. The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Since I paid in full what I owed Israel's grandfather, Abraham, on My promissory note—*And also that nation whom they shall serve will I judge* (Gen. 15:14)—I am able to go out with head held high,¹⁵ as is said *And Moses said, "Thus saith the Lord: About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt,"* etc. (Exod. 11:4).

According to R. Yudan citing R. Jacob bar Abina, R. Abbahu in expounding in the synagogue of the village of Tiberias the words *I will go up with you*¹⁶ *out of the affliction of Egypt* (Exod. 3:17), asserted: These words are difficult to understand unless we take them to mean that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: Since My children and I are partners in trouble, it is right that I Myself smite in requital those that hate them.

7. *And it came to pass at midnight, that the Lord smote all the first-born.* What is implied by *all* in the expression *all the first-born*? That first-born males sired by men, first-born males given birth to by women, and even first-born females died that night. Hence it is said *all the first-born*.

Another comment: *All the first-born*. It was not only the first-born who died. If it were, why should Scripture go on to say, *There was not a house where there was not one dead* (Exod. 12:30)? Since it is possible that there were houses where there were no first-born, what is meant by saying *There was not a house*, etc.? R. Abba bar Hama explained: In a house that had no first-born the Holy One, blessed be He, smote the one who was put in charge of the house, as is said *He smote all the first-born in Egypt*,¹⁷ *the chief of all their substance* (Ps. 105:36), the word *chief* being understood as in the verse *Shimri the chief, for though he was not the first-born, yet his father made him chief* (1 Chron. 26:10).

15. See Onkelos and Rashi on Exod. 14:8.

16. JV: *I will bring you up out of*, etc. However, by a slight change in localization, the Hebrew word for "you" may be read "with you."

17. MT: *in their land*.

8. Another comment: *And it came to pass at midnight* (Exod. 12:29). Now what is said in the verse preceding this one? *And Moses said: ". . . And all these thy servants shall come down unto me"* (Exod. 11:4, 8). By the phrase *thy servants* Pharaoh's centurions are meant; and by the word *all* is meant the captains of thousands in his troops.¹⁸ Does Moses' use of *these* indicate that all of Pharaoh's servants would remain alive? Of course not. When Moses spoke to Pharaoh of *these thy servants*, he meant that only some would remain alive while others would die because they were first-born. So what Moses meant was this: *All these thy servants [who will remain alive] shall come down unto me.*

When the Egyptians heard Moses say that the first-born would die, they said: "Behold, each one of us has some four or five children. Even if the first-born die, the rest will remain alive." Now when the first-born saw that their fathers were resigned to abandoning them to their fate, they went to Pharaoh. They said: Sire, we beg of thee, see to it that we stay alive. He replied: "Before I can keep you alive, I must see to it that I keep myself alive."¹⁹ When the first-born realized that Pharaoh was dismissing them, at once they got together and slew sixty myriads of their fathers.

R. Jose bar Hanina taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, moved against the Egyptians with the tactics used by a king in command of his army. How so? In the world's use, when a province rebels against a king, what does the king do to it? He first shuts off its water. So did the Holy One, blessed be He. He first turned the Egyptians' water into blood, as is said *Over all their ponds of water that they may become blood* (Exod. 7:19). What does a king do next? He brings up trumpeters to sound a warning against the province. Even thus the Holy One, blessed be He, brought frogs against Egypt to serve as trumpet-

18. So read by Epstein, MKHY, 1, 103. FT is corrupt. Parma MS may be read *kulyyrkym*, "chiliarchs, captains of thousands." The commentator utilizes the phonetic resemblance between the Hebrew *kol* (*chol*), "all," and the Greek *chil[ias]*, "battalion of 1000 soldiers."

19. He too was a first-born. See Piska 17:5.

ers of a warning against Pharaoh, as is said *Concerning the trumpeting of the frogs*²⁰ (Exod. 8:8). What does a king do next to the rebellious province? He makes a trench²¹ in the earth round about it. Even thus did the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said *Smite the dust of the earth, that it may become gnats* (Exod. 8:12). What does a king do next to the province? He brings his troops in swarms against its people. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, brought swarms of wild animals against the Egyptians, as is said *And*²² *the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of wild animals*²³ (Exod. 8:17). What does a king do next to the province? He orders a manhunt in which he slays the innocent and the guilty alike. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, brought pestilence upon the Egyptians: *Surely now I had put forth My hand, and smitten thee and thy people with pestilence* (Exod. 9:15). What does a king do next to the province? He showers burning tar upon its people. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, afflicted the Egyptians with boils like burning tar. What does a king do next to the province? He brings up catapults. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, catapulted hail upon the Egyptians. What does a king do next to the province? He sends storm troops against its people. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, sent locusts against the Egyptians in Egypt, locusts of which it is said *They enter in at the windows like a thief* (Joel 2:9). What does a king do next to the province? He puts its people in prisons. Even so the Holy One, blessed be He, did to the Egyptians: *They saw not one another* (Exod. 10:23). What does a king do next to the people of the province? He slays the oldest among them. Even so the

20. "What does a king do next? He brings up trumpeters . . . *the trumpeting of the frogs*"—Parma MS.

21. From the shelter of which the king's soldiers shoot freely at the enemy within the city. The word *bs'th* is thus regarded as representing the Latin *ossatum*, "trench."

According to Jastrow (p. 359), *bs'th* is a corruption of *hasta*, the Latin or spear; and the clause in which the verse occurs would read: "He hurls a spear to the province [as a declaration of war]."

22. Parma MS: "*Thy houses and,*" etc.

23. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 5, 430. JV: *swarms of flies*.

Holy One, blessed be He, slew the oldest, [the first-born, that is], of the Egyptians.

9. *And it came to pass at midnight.* In regard to this verse, R. Levi bar Hanina taught: Note carefully the following text: *As at the report concerning Egypt, so they shall be startled at the fall of the adversary* (šr) (Isa. 23:5). What is signified [by the dropping of the letter *waw* from its usual place in the middle of the word šr]? Whereas šr written full (*Šwr*) is the name for Tyre, šr with the *waw* dropped is a name for Rome.²⁴ The text thus implies that even as He requited the Egyptians with all the aforesaid afflictions, so will the Holy One, blessed be He, requite them—[the Romans]—as is told in *the report concerning Egypt*.

10. Another comment: *And it came to pass at midnight.* These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *For there is a Man whose labor is with wisdom, with knowledge, and with success; yet to a man that hath not labored therein shall He give it for his portion*, etc. (Eccles. 2:21). The words *For there is a Man whose labor is with wisdom* refer to the Holy One, blessed be He: "The Lord by wisdom founded the earth" (Prov. 3:19). *And with knowledge*: "By His knowledge the depths were broken up" (Prov. 3:20). With regard to the words *and with success*, R. Berechiah taught in the name of R. Judah ben Pazzi: The words *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made* (Ps. 33:6) imply that when the Lord uttered the word "heavens," straightway they *were made*. But though the world came into being on account of Israel, yet the children of Israel were given over to the Egyptians: *To a man that hath not labored therein shall He give it for his portion*. Who is the man referred to in this verse? He stands for the Egyptians, of whom it is said "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God" (Isa. 31:3).

[In speaking of the Egyptian to whom the world was given as his portion], the verse in Ecclesiastes goes on to say *For all*

24. See Piskas 14.14, 15.25, and 17.8.

his days bring sorrows (Eccles. 2:23): The Egyptians enslaved the children of Israel during all their days in Egypt. *And his occupation, vexation* (*ibid.*): The Egyptians vexed the children of Israel cruelly—so much so that they knew what it was to be dead even while they were alive. According to R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, the Egyptians imposed men's work upon women and women's work upon men. What is meant by the words which follow in the verse from Ecclesiastes: *Yea, even in the night his heart giveth no rest?* That even at night the Egyptians continued Israel's bondage. *This also is vanity*: The Egyptians used to say, "Prostrate yourselves before our idols; light incense before our idols."²⁵

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Even at night you enslave My children by forcing such vanities upon them. As ye live, I too shall requite you therefore by night: *And it came to pass at midnight.*

11. Another comment: *And it came to pass at midnight.* To this verse Scripture refers—so R. Abin the Levite began his discourse—in the passage *That confirmeth the word of His servant, and performeth the counsel of His messengers* (Isa. 44:26). The phrase *His servant* in the words *That confirmeth the word of His servant* applies to Moses whom God called "My servant Moses" (Num. 12:7). In what way did God confirm Moses' word? The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: *Yet one plague more will I bring upon Pharaoh and upon Egypt* (Exod. 11:1). Moses went and on his own specified the exact time of the plague, saying *Thus saith the Lord: At the time of*²⁶ *midnight will I go out into the land of Egypt* (Exod. 11:4). According to R. Abin the Levite Berabbi, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: I did not make specific the time of the next plague. But since thou saidst *At the time of midnight*, upon thy life, I shall confirm thy word: *And it came to pass at midnight that the Lord smote all the first-born* (Exod. 12:29).

25. "Prostrate yourselves . . . our idols"—Parma MS.

26. EV: *about*.

SUMMARY

The reward of repentance
and the need for peace

Any man who calls upon God's name in prayer and frees himself of sin by repentance will be safe from the punishment of Sheol. The wicked who do not repent are considered dead even while they are alive. God declares: The righteous in Israel who are busy with Torah and who bless, hallow, and proclaim My oneness—these, when they die, I lay down with great honor in the Garden of Eden, and I give them rest in their graves. On Sabbath eves, on New Moons, on festal days and seasons they rise out of their graves and sing for joy and utter praise of My name.

To know such joy and to be saved from Sheol, God says, let a man give charity, sharing his bread with the poor and giving a portion of his money to teachers and their pupils. Let him be diligent in Torah and in its precepts. Let him act with humility, not speaking in arrogance, but considering himself less wise than other mortals (Sec. 1).

For the tasks that God wished them to perform, none were deemed more worthy than Moses, or than the generation of the wilderness, or than the people of Israel. For the events which God willed to happen in the world, no places were deemed more worthy than the Red Sea, Mount Sinai, Jerusalem, and Mount Moriah, no times more worthy than the Sabbath day and the month of Tishri (Sec. 2).

On the first day of Tishri, God pleads with Israel to repent in this world while He is still seated upon the dais of mercy (Sec. 3), for the reward of repentance is great. Reuben, who repented for his sin with Bilhah and was thus the first Israelite to repent, was rewarded by having his descendant Hosea be the first to speak of repentance (Sec. 4). Cain resolved to repent and thereupon one of the two decrees against him was rescinded (Sec. 5).

God ordained the Ten Days of Repentance to give Israel a chance to take hold of repentance, and so make peace with one another and forgive one another.

God so loves peace among mankind that He even revised Sarah's words to Abraham lest he be offended at her calling him old. When Israel maintain peace among themselves, God stays even the punishment for the worship of idols. Since the stones of the altar make peace between man and man through the sacrifices made upon them, God saves them from the stroke of the sword—no iron tool may be lifted upon them.

Three things—prayer, repentance, and charity—avert a harsh decree (Sec. 6).

*Return, O Israel, unto the Lord
thy God; for thou hast stumbled in thine
iniquity (Hos. 14:2).¹*

1. This verse is to be considered in the light of what Isaiah was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *For Sheol cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee; they that go down to the pit cannot hope for Thy truth* (Isa. 38:18). Can this verse in Isaiah really mean what it seems to be asserting to the Holy One, blessed be He? Can it mean that a man who has merit in Thy sight and is free from evil deeds will go down into Sheol? Of course, this is not what the verse means. What God actually meant was this: Since it is true that man was created only to give praise to My name and My glory, as is said *Every one that calls himself by My name and upon My glory—[for this] I created him, I have formed him, yea, I have made him* (Isa. 43:7), any man who calls upon My name in prayer and is free of sin will be safe from the punishment of Sheol. Isaiah asked further of the Holy One, blessed be He: Even though a man sin against Thee, but repents, is it not Thy delight to forgive him so that the man lives instead of dying? For from the dead there is no praise for Thee, as David said *The dead praise not the*

1. See Piska 44, n. 1.

Lord (Ps. 115:17). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied to Isaiah: My son, what David said in this verse applies to the wicked who do not repent and who provoke Me by following the ways of heathen nations. Still I wait for them: "Perhaps they will repent." Such men are called dead even while they are alive, as is intimated in the verse *For I have no pleasure in the death of the dead* (Ezek. 18:32). But the righteous in Israel who in awe of divine judgment are busy with Torah, and who, every day of their lives, with all parts of their bodies, bless, hallow, and proclaim My oneness—these, when they die, I lay down, as is proper, with great honor under the tree of life in the Garden of Eden; and I give them rest in their graves. On the eve of Sabbaths, on New Moons, on festal days and seasons they rise out of their graves and sing for joy and utter praise of My name: *Holy men exult in glory; they sing for joy upon their beds* (Ps. 149:5). As for the wicked, they do not bless Me, neither in life nor in death. This is what David had in mind when he said: *The dead do not praise God*; and this, too, is what is meant by the word *For Sheol cannot praise Thee*.²

Another comment: *For Sheol cannot praise Thee*. Isaiah asked: Master of the universe, what ought a man do to be saved from the punishment of Sheol? God replied: Let him give charity, sharing his bread with the poor and giving a portion of his money to teachers and their pupils. Let him not consider himself wiser than other mortals. Let him be diligent in Torah and in its precepts. Let him act with humility, not speaking in arrogance, but considering himself less wise than other mortals. With him I will dwell, as is said *I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit* (Isa. 57:15). I bear witness that he who has these virtues will inherit the world-to-come; and that he who has Torah, good deeds, humility, and fear of heaven will be saved from punishment [in Sheol].³

2. See Piska 2.3.

3. Isa. 38:18a is apparently read "He who gives Thee praise will not [go to] Sheol."

2. *He stood, and measured the earth*⁴ (Hab. 3:6). It is taught in a Baraita: According to R. Simeon ben Yoḥai, these words imply that the Holy One, blessed be He, took the measure of all the children of men and found no man other than our master Moses worthy of taking into his hands the leading forth of Israel out of Egypt. The Holy One, blessed be He, took the measure of all seas and found no other than the Red Sea worthy of having Israel brought through it. He took the measure of all generations and found no generation other than the generation of the wilderness worthy of having the Torah given to it. The Holy One, blessed be He, took the measure of all peoples and found no entire people other than Israel worthy of receiving the Torah. He took the measure of all the mountains and found no mountain other than Mount Sinai suitable for giving the Torah on it. He took the measure of all lands and found no city other than Jerusalem suitable for building the Temple within it. Again the Holy One, blessed be He, took the measure of all the mountains and found no mountain other than Mount Moriah upon which He might cause His presence to dwell. He took the measure of the days of creation and found no day worthy of being made holy other than the Sabbath day in which He rested from all His work. He took the measure of the months and found no month suitable for forgiveness and for atonement other than the month of Tishri in which the Patriarchs were born:⁵ he who repents during that month will be helped by the Patriarchs' uprightness.⁶ All such measuring is implied in the words *He stood up, and measured the earth*.

3. Another comment: *Return, O Israel*, etc. According to R. Eleazar, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, return in repentance to Me and I shall give you mercy while I am seated upon the dais of mercy. For in this world

4. I omit the rest of the verse, namely, *He beholdeth, and maketh the nations to tremble*.

5. See Piska 6.6; and B.RH 10b.

6. "Patriarchs' uprightness"—Parma MS; FT: "the month's (?) uprightness."

the Holy One, blessed be He, is occupied only with civil cases and judges in mercy, as is said *For God is judge; He putteth down one, and lifteth up another*⁷ (Ps. 75:8); in the world-to-come, however, He deals only with capital cases and judges with wrath, as is said *For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup with foaming wine . . . the bitter dregs thereof . . . the wicked . . . shall drink* (Ps. 75:9).⁸

[In connection with God's calling upon Israel to repent], R. Samuel⁹ bar Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: The Sages group together four verses, each of which requires special interpretation. The first is this: *Whatsoever thy hand attaineth to do by thy strength, that do* (Eccles. 9:10). We are to take the verse as meaning that in this world you are to prepare yourself as a man on dry land or on the day before the Sabbath prepares himself for a sea voyage or for the Sabbath: for in the world-to-come you are like a man who is already at sea or like a man on the Sabbath. If a man makes preparations on the day before the Sabbath, or while he is still on land, he will have something to eat on the Sabbath or at sea. But if he makes no preparations on land or on the day before the Sabbath, what will he have to eat at sea or on the Sabbath?¹⁰ The second of the four verses is this: *The small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master* (Job 3:19). But does not everyone know that both the small and the great are there in the world-to-come? In this world, however, the verse implies, it is not evident who is small and who is great. It was the world-to-come that Ruth had in mind when she said to Naomi, *Surely death will part thee and me* (Ruth 1:17). The third of the four verses is this: *For a living dog is better than a dead lion* (Eccles. 9:4). Does not everyone know that this is so? What the verse means to teach, however, is that a wicked man who lives in this world and re-

7. See Exod. Rabbah 31:14, and Ruth Rabbah 3:1-3.

8. The verse in Hosea is apparently interpreted "Return while the Lord in His quality of mercy is thy God, thy Judge." Cf. PRKM, p. 472, and Piska 44, n. 1a.

9. "R. Samuel"—so FT; Parma MS and P: "R. Simeon."

10. See Targum Jonathan; Num. Rabbah 8:9; and Midrash Prov. 6:6.

pents is better off than a righteous man who departs this life in a state of sin.¹¹ The final one of the four verses is this: *Take with you words, and return unto the Lord* (Hos. 14:3). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, I will not accept burnt offerings, or sin offerings, or guilt offerings, or meal offerings from you. Propitiate Me only with prayer, with supplication, and with right direction of the heart. If you suppose, however, that you can propitiate Me with idle words, heed what Scripture says: *Thou art not a God propitiated by [one retaining] wickedness; evil sojourneth not with Thee*¹² (Ps. 5:5)—propitiation requires confession, supplication, and tears. Such is the meaning of *Take with you words*, etc.

4. Another comment: *Return, O Israel*, etc. These words are to be considered in the light of what Solomon was inspired by the holy spirit to say: *A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his mouth, and the doings of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him* (Prov. 12:14). Whom did Solomon have in mind in this verse? None other than Reuben, whose repentance is intimated in the verse *And Reuben returned*¹³ *unto the pit* (Gen. 37:29) [from which he had been absent doing penance]. R. Eleazar said: Reuben was absent, wearing his sackcloth and fasting because of that deed of his which took place [with Bilhah]. But no sooner had he put aside his sackcloth and his fast than he came and peeped into the pit, *and, behold, Joseph was not in the pit* (*ibid.*).

11. The wicked, having repented, has already been forgiven; the righteous, being now dead, cannot undo the sin he has not repented of while living.

12. As usually understood, the continuity in Ps. 5:2-8 appears to be faulty. And so the commentator construes Ps. 5:5-8 as follows: *Because Thou art not a God propitiated by [one retaining] wickedness; because evil sojourneth not with Thee . . . therefore when through Thy kindness I come into Thy House [to pray], I bow down . . . with [genuine] reverence for Thee.*"

13. The Hebrew word for *returned* may also be rendered "repented." Reuben sinned with Bilhah, his father's concubine (Gen. 35:22), and was filled with remorse and contrition. Because of Reuben's deed, Jacob conferred the birthright upon Joseph and thereby brought about the brothers' jealousy. And since Reuben blamed himself for the rift between the brothers, he was away in sackcloth, penitent, while his brothers were feasting.

The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Reuben, thou didst seek to return Joseph, the well-loved son, to thy father. Upon thy life, a son of a son's son of thine will bring about the return of Israel in perfect repentance to their Father in heaven. And who will he be? Hosea the son of Beeri. Of him it is written *With Hosea the Lord first spoke [of repentance]*¹⁴ (Hos. 1:2); and of Hosea's father it is written *Beerah, [Baal's] son, whom Tillegath-pilneser*¹⁵ *king of Assyria carried away captive; he was prince of the Reubenites* (1 Chron. 5:6). And why is he here called [not Beeri, as in Hosea, but] Beerah, "he of her well"? To intimate that he was a well of Torah.¹⁶ Why then was it necessary for Beerah to die in exile? So that because of his merit, the Ten Tribes [might rise at the time of the resurrection and] return with him to Jerusalem, even as Moses died in the wilderness so that because of his merit the generation of the wilderness might rise up [at the time of the resurrection] and turn unto [the Promised Land].

<According to R. Berechiah>, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Reuben: Thou wast first in the act of repentance. Upon thy life, when Hosea son of Beeri, thy son's son, comes, he will be the first to speak of repentance to Israel, as is said *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord*, etc. What parable fits here? That of a province which rebelled against the king, so that the king sent instructions to lay it waste. Now the messenger was a knowing man, and he said to the people of the province: Take an oath that you will not rebel against the king, and the king will not do to you as he did to such-and-such a province and its environs. Even so the son of Beeri in rebuking Israel said to them: My children, repent, and the Holy One, blessed be He, will not do again what He did to Samaria and to its environs [because of their rebellion].¹⁷

14. JV: *When the Lord spoke at first with Hosea.*

15. So FT; Parma MS: *Tiglath-pileser.*

16. "And why . . . Beerah . . . well of Torah"—Parma MS.

17. Just before pleading *Return, O Israel*, Hosea declared: *Samaria shall bear her guilt, for she hath rebelled against her God* (Hos. 14:1).

5. <Another comment: *Return, O Israel*, etc.> According to R. Eleazar, Israel asked right out of the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, if we do resolve repentance, wilt Thou accept it? He replied: My children, if I accepted the repentance of Cain, will I not accept your repentance? Though two verdicts were rendered against Cain, as is evident from the verse *A fugitive and a wanderer shalt thou be in the earth* (Gen. 4:12), as soon as Cain resolved repentance, saying *Mine iniquity is greater than can be forgiven* (Gen. 4:13), one of the two decrees against him was rescinded, as is said *And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the Land of Nod* ("Wandering") (Gen. 4:16), [as a wanderer, but not as a fugitive]. Adam met him and asked: My son, how is it that your case turned out this way? Cain replied: I resolved repentance and was delivered. When Adam heard this, he began to strike his own face, saying: Is such the great power of repentance? I did not know. Thereupon Adam opened his mouth in praise of the power of repentance: *A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day. It is a good thing to confess to the Lord* (Ps. 92:1-2).

6. May God's name be praised and His title exalted! For in His tender regard of Israel, He ordained the Ten Days of Repentance¹⁸ for them, so that if even only one of the congregation of Israel resolves repentance, his repentance is accepted as though it were the repentance of an entire congregation. Therefore all Israel should take hold of repentance and hold on to it. Let them make peace with one another and forgive one another on the eve of the Day of Atonement, in order that the Holy One, blessed be He, in His own presence, accept their repentance and prayer in reconciliation and with special love. Indeed we find the power of peace among men to be so great that for its sake the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself revises the words a person has uttered. For example, in the passage *And Sarah laughed within herself, saying . . . "Shall I have pleasure, my lord being*

18. The ten days between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement.

so old?" (Gen. 18:12), but unto Abraham the Lord said: "Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying: Shall I of a surety bear a child, old as I am?" (Gen. 18:13). Note that Sarah uttered the words *my lord being so old*, but <the Holy One, blessed be He>, revised her words, having her say *old as I am*, in order that no bad feelings should rise between Abraham and Sarah because of her calling him old.

R. Eleazar taught: Great is peace among men! Even when Israel worship idols, but maintain peace among themselves and stand together as one company, the measure of God's justice will not touch them. Thus it is said *Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone* (Hos. 4:17).

R. Eleazar taught further: Great is peace among men! Indeed, the Priestly Benediction closes with an invocation of peace, as is said *And He will grant thee peace* (Num. 6:26). And in the world-to-come, when the Holy One, blessed be He, returns to Jerusalem and has all the banished ones return to it, He will cause them to return at peace with one another, as is said *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem* (Ps. 122:6). And so, too, Scripture says, *Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river* (Isa. 66:12).

Come and see how great is the reward of him who makes peace between man and man! It is written: *Thou shalt build the altar of the Lord thy God of unhewn stones* (Deut. 27:6). True, stones cannot hear, cannot see, cannot smell, cannot speak, but since they make peace between man and man through the sacrifices made upon the stones of the altar, Scripture saves the stones from the stroke of the sword and on their behalf enjoins *Thou shalt lift up no iron tool upon them* (Deut. 27:5). Hence for man who can hear and see and smell and speak, how much more will be done when he makes peace between man and man!

The Rabbis taught: Three things—prayer, turning in repentance to God, and charity—avert a harsh decree, as is indicated in a single verse wherein all three are specifically referred to: *If My people, upon whom My name is called, shall humble themselves, and pray* (2 Chron. 7:14). Here the word *pray* re-

fers to prayer; the next words in the verse, *and seek My face* (*ibid.*), refer to acts of charity, as when Scripture says, "As for me, I shall behold Thy face through charity" (Ps. 17:15);¹⁹ the following words in the verse, *and turn from their evil way* (*ibid.*), refer to turning in repentance to God.

All the foregoing commentary is evoked by the verse *Return, O Israel, unto the Lord thy God.*

19. See MTeh 17:14; and [Piska 52.3].

SUMMARY

Lessons of the Feast of Tabernacles

Instruction in Torah is more precious than silver. Thus, while collectors of charity who put pressure upon people for contributions they cannot afford will, according to Scripture, be punished, collectors of money in behalf of instructors in Bible and Mishnah are free to collect as much as they are able. As to compensation for teaching even one word in the Torah, no human being can ever pay enough.

R. Johanan disposed of all his possessions so that he might devote himself entirely to Torah. Three men whose lives exemplify such devotion are eulogized.

Obedience is to be given to Torah's precepts and the apparent cost of obedience is not to be reckoned, for obedience to a command, such as the one concerning the high-priced lulab, may well bring a reward beyond human calculation (Sec. 1).

Observations on the lulab and ethrog follow: The ethrog grows on a tree whose wood and fruit have the same aroma. On the ethrog-tree is to be found at one and the same time ripe and unripe fruit, unblemished and blemished fruit, even as in Israel are to be found at one and the same time righteous men and ordinary ones, learned men and ignorant, with young men coming along in learning and leadership while the older men are still alive.

Observations on the lulab: Like the palm-tree which has a single heart that keeps reaching upwards, so Israel has a single heart reaching upwards—up to their Father in heaven.

The four plants bound together in the lulab cluster represent symbolically Israel's need for mutual help.

The lulab cluster also may represent God's glory, the Patriarchs,

• In Parma MS, fol. 220b-222a, the following Piska, not in FT, precedes Piska 52.

the Matriarchs, and the Sanhedrin; or the four plants in the cluster may represent different kinds of Jews (Sec. 2).

The four plants in the lulab cluster are among the seven requirements for the Feast of Tabernacles, as shown by the verse *Make me to know the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy* (Ps. 16:11). Other verses from Psalms, *He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute man . . . a people that shall be created shall praise Him anew* (Ps. 102:18-19), are variously interpreted, but are finally applied to the lulab and ethrog whereby Israel offer praise to God on the Feast of Tabernacles (Secs. 4-5).

So, too, the words *Then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy* (Ps. 96:12) are interpreted as referring to the lulab cluster (Sec. 6).

The several parts of the verses *I will wash my hands in innocency; so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord, that I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard, and tell of all Thy wondrous works* (Ps. 26:6-7) are construed as meaning that the lulab cluster must be obtained innocently, not dishonestly; that men with lulabs compassed the altar once on each day of Tabernacles; that festal thank offerings are to be made on Tabernacles; and that the *Hallel* Psalms are to be heard (Sec. 7).

In referring to the time of the year when the Feast of Tabernacles is to be celebrated, Scripture changes from counting by days in the month to counting by days in the festival. The reason for the shift is explained by a parable. On the Feast of Tabernacles, Israel go and fetch myrtles and willows and palm branches and build booths and sing praises to God because He has made atonement for them on the Day of Atonement. So, on the first day of the Feast, God says: Let bygones be bygones. From this moment on commences a new reckoning. Today, the first day of Tabernacles, is to be the first day in the new reckoning of iniquities (Sec. 8).

*And ye shall take for your own
sake on the first day the fruit of
goodly trees, etc. (Lev. 23:40).¹*

1. R. Abba bar Kahana began his discourse by quoting *Take My instruction, and not silver* (Prov. 8:10), which R. Abba bar

1. The lesson for the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Kahana took to mean "Take the instruction of Torah, and not silver," and then went on to quote *Wherefore do ye weigh out silver? Because there is no bread*² (Isa. 55:2). Why are you forced to weigh out silver as tribute to the children of Esau? Is it not *because there is no bread*?—because you have not taken your fill of the bread of Torah? *And the forced labor which you must give* (*ibid.*). Why must you give forced labor while the nations of the earth are filled with food?³ *Because you have not had enough*⁴ (*ibid.*)—because you have not drunk enough of the wine of Torah, of which it is written "Come, eat of My bread, and drink of the wine which I have mingled" (Prov. 9:5).

R. Berechiah and R. Hiyya his father taught in the name of R. Jose the son of R. Nehorai: It is written *And I will punish all that oppress [the people of Jacob]* (Jer. 30:20), a statement that applies even to collectors of charity [when they put pressure upon people for contributions the latter cannot afford]. But the statement does not apply to those who collect money in behalf of teachers of Bible and teachers of Mishnah, payment which the teachers of Bible and teachers of Mishnah merit because they do not labor at some other employment in their own behalf. As to compensation for teaching even one word in the Torah, for such teaching no human being can give adequate compensation.⁵ Indeed in a Baraita it is taught: In heaven, on New Year's Day, the amount of money allotted for a man's needs is specified, except the amount which he expends for celebration of festivals, Sabbaths, and New Moons, and the amount which a child takes as payment to his schoolmaster's house. When a man expends less for such purposes, his allotment is made less; and when he gives more, his allotment is made more.

In connection with the study of Torah, a story is told of R.

2. JV: *Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread.*

3. "Why must you . . . with food"—parallels in Lev. Rabbah 30:1, and PRKM, p. 401.

4. JV: *And your gain for that which satisfieth not?*

5. Apparently R. Berechiah construes Prov. 8:10: *Take My instruction, and reckon not its cost in silver.*

Johanán who was taking a walk up from Tiberias to Sepphoris, leaning on the shoulder of R. Hiyya the son of R. Abba. When they came to a certain farm, R. Johanán said: This farm was mine and I sold it because I wanted to devote myself entirely to the study of Torah. When they came to a vineyard, R. Johanán said: This vineyard was mine and I sold it because I wanted to devote myself entirely to the study of Torah. When they came to an oliveyard, R. Johanán said: This oliveyard was mine and I sold it because I wanted to devote myself entirely to the study of Torah. Thereupon R. Hiyya the son of R. Abba began to weep. When R. Johanán asked, "Why are you weeping?" his companion replied: I weep because my master put nothing aside for his old age. R. Johanán said: Hiyya, my son, is what I did really as flighty as you seem to think? I gave up something which took no more than six days to provide and acquired something which took forty days and forty nights to provide. For God gave to the creation of the entire world no more than six days, as is written *In six days the Lord made heaven and earth* (Exod. 31:17); but to give the Torah He took forty days, as is written *And he was there with the Lord forty days and forty nights* (Exod. 34:28).

When R. Johanán was laid to rest, his generation applied to him the verse *When a man giveth all the substance of his house for love* (Song 8:7)—for such love as R. Johanán had for the Torah—he will be given [in the world-to-come] rich spoil⁶ (*ibid.*). When Abba Hoshai of Teria was laid to rest, they saw his bier flying through the air [as a sign of God's love for him]; his generation spoke of him in contrast to *the man who gives all the substance of his house for [a woman's] love*, thinking to get in exchange such love as the Ground of Being had for Abba Hoshai of Teria—such a man would be utterly condemned. When R. Eleazar the son of Simeon was laid to rest, his generation applied to him the verse *Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke, perfumed with*

6. So Targum; JV: *he would be utterly condemned*. But the stem *bx* can mean both "condemn" and "spoil, booty."

myrrh and frankincense, with all powders of the merchant? (Song 3:6). What did they mean by *with all powders of the merchant*? That he had rare powers—that he was a teacher of Scripture, a precentor,⁷ and a poet.

In another comment, the verse is read *Take My instruction, and reckon not its apparent cost* (Prov. 8:10). R. Abba bar Kahana said: [The great reward for taking the lulab cluster you may infer] from the reward for the act of “taking” in Egypt, as referred to in the verse *And ye shall take a bunch of hyssop* (Exod. 12:22). And what was the value of the hyssop? Four farthings, five farthings at most. Yet it was this bunch of hyssop, [by which Israel survived the plague of the first-born], that eventually enabled Israel to take possession of the spoil of Egypt, of the spoil at the Red Sea, of the spoil of Sihon and Og, and of the spoil of the thirty-one kings of Canaan. Now for the taking of the lulab cluster, which costs a man ever so much more money and with which ever so many more precepts are associated, how much greater and greater is the reward! Hence Moses charged Israel, saying *Take for your own sake on the first day the fruit of goodly trees.*

2. We learned in a Baraita: *Take ye on the first day the fruit [which is like its parent] tree, the hadar* (Lev. 23:40), in that both the wood and the fruit have the same aroma. Thus we know that *the hadar* is the ethrog.

Concerning *hadar*, Rabbi said: Do not read *hadar* but *ha-dir*, that is, the tree whose fruit is like cattle in a shed (*ha-dir*). Even as in a cattle shed are to be found full-grown animals and young ones, unblemished and blemished, with the young ones coming along while the full-grown are still alive; so upon the ethrog tree is to be found at one and the same time ripe and unripe fruit, unblemished and blemished fruit. So, too, in Israel is to be found at one and the same time righteous men and ordinary ones, learned men and ignorant, with young men coming along while the older men are still alive: even before our master Moses died, the sun of Joshua his disciple rose; even before Eli,

7. See Lev. Rabbah M, p. 690, n. 5.

the High Priest, died, the sun of his pupil Samuel of Ramah rose; even before Elijah vanished [in heaven], the sun of his disciple Elisha the son of Shaphat rose; even before R. 'Aqiba died, our holy master R. Judah was born.

Take ye—a branch of palm trees (Lev. 23:40): Like the palm tree which has a single heart that keeps reaching upwards, so Israel has a single heart reaching upwards—up to their Father in heaven.

We learned in a Baraita: Of the four plants that make up the lulab cluster, two bear fruit and two do not bear fruit. The ones that bear fruit must be bound closely to the ones that do not bear fruit. The former represent disciples of the wise whose prayers, in keeping with the admonition from Palestine, are meant to bear fruits of mercy for ordinary householders, delivering them from all degrees of poverty and all kinds of affliction, the admonition being: "Let grape clusters pray for mercy in behalf of the leaves, because if it were not for the leaves the grape clusters could not endure." On the other hand, the plants that do not bear fruit must be bound close to those that bear fruit, since the former represent those persons who are meant to provide a shelter of physical comfort for the Sages and their disciples.

Another comment: *Take ye . . . the fruit of the tree hadar*, etc. (Lev. 23:40). *Hadar* is a symbol of the Holy One, of whom it is said "Thou art clothed with glory and majesty (*hadar*)" (Ps. 104:1). *A branch of palm trees* (Lev. 23:40) likewise is a symbol of the Holy One, of whom it is written "The Righteous One shall flourish like the palm-tree" (Ps. 92:13). *And boughs of a leafy tree* (Lev. 23:40) is likewise a symbol of the Holy One, of whom it is said "And He stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom" (Zech. 1:8). *And willows ('arḇe) of the brook* (Lev. 23:40) is likewise a symbol of the Holy One, of whom it is written "Extol Him that rideth upon the skies ('āraḇoṭ), whose name is the Lord" (Ps. 68:5).⁸

Another comment: *Take ye . . . the fruit of the tree hadar*

8. The taking of the four plants is intended to symbolize God's mercy in sending down rain.

(Lev. 23:40). *Hadar* stands for our father Abraham to whom the Holy One gave a majestic bearing in his old age, for it is written "And when Abraham was well on in years, he was majestic in age" (Gen. 24:1). *A branch (ḥappot) of palm trees* (Lev. 23:40) stands for our father Isaac who was tied (ḥafut) and bound upon the altar.⁹ *And boughs of a leafy tree (ibid.)* stands for our father Jacob: even as the myrtle tree is rich in leaves, so Jacob was rich in sons. *And willows of the brook* stands for Joseph: as the willow in the lulab cluster wilts before the other three plants do, so Joseph died before his brothers did.¹⁰

Another comment: *Take ye . . . the fruit of the tree hadar* (Lev. 23:40). *Hadar* stands for our mother Sarah to whom the Holy One gave a majestic bearing in her old age, as is written "When Abraham and Sarah were old, they were majestic in age" (Gen. 18:11). *A branch of palm trees* (Lev. 23:40) stands for our mother Rebekah: like the palm-tree which bears both fruit and thorns, so Rebekah bore a righteous man and a wicked man. *And boughs of a leafy tree (ibid.)* stands for our mother Leah: as the myrtle tree is rich in leaves, so Leah¹¹ was rich in children. *And willows of the brook (ibid.)* stands for our mother Rachel: as the willow in the lulab cluster wilts and dries up before the other three plants do, so Rachel died before her sister did.

Another comment: *Take ye . . . the fruit of the tree hadar* (Lev. 23:40). *Hadar* stands for the Great Sanhedrin of Israel whom the Holy One endowed with the majesty of hoary heads, as is written "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor (*hadarta*) the face of the man who got wisdom"¹² (Lev. 19:32). *And ḥappot (branches) of palm trees* (Lev. 23:40) stands for disciples of the wise who make sacrifice of their physi-

9. "stands for . . . Isaac . . . upon the altar"—parallels in Lev. Rabbah 30:10; and PRKM, p. 414.

10. See Gen. 50:24-26. In taking the four plants, the Jew thus invokes the merit of the Patriarchs so that God would send down rain.

11. "a righteous man . . . so Leah"—margin in Parma MS.

12. JV: *the old man*. But the commentator apparently takes *zkn*, "old man," as portmanteau for *zh šknh* [*škmh*], "one who got wisdom."

cal comfort (*kofin*) to learn Torah from one another. *And boughs of a leafy tree (ibid.)*—the three boughs of myrtle stand for the three rows of the Sages' disciples who sat before the Sanhedrin. *And willows of the brook (ibid.)*—the two willows stand for the two scribes of the judges who were stationed in attendance upon the Sanhedrin, one on the right and one on the left.¹³

In another comment the verse is read *Take for your own sake . . . [a cluster including] the fruit of goodly trees*, etc. (Lev. 23:40), *the fruit of goodly trees* [the ethrog] standing for [some men in] Israel: even as the ethrog has aroma and has edible fruit, so Israel have in their midst men who have knowledge of Torah and also have good deeds. *And branches of palm trees (ibid.)* also stands for [some men in] Israel: as the palm tree has edible fruit but no aroma, so Israel have in their midst men who have knowledge of Torah but have not good deeds. *And branches of leafy trees (ibid.)* also stands for [some men in] Israel: as the myrtle tree has aroma but has not edible fruit, so Israel have in their midst men who have good deeds but have not Torah. *And willows of the brook (ibid.)* also stands for [some men in] Israel: even as the willow has neither edible fruit nor aroma, so Israel have in their midst men in whom there is neither knowledge of Torah nor good deeds. The Holy One says: In order to make it impossible for Israel to be destroyed, let all of them be bound together as plants are bound into a cluster, so that the righteous among them will atone for the others. Hence Moses charged Israel: *Take for your own sake on the first day [a cluster]*, etc. (Lev. 23:40).

3. R. Berechiah taught in the name of R. Abba [bar Kahana]: Through the merit of your obeying the precept *Take ye on the first day*, etc., I, [says God], shall reveal Myself to you as "the First," and in your behalf inflict punishment upon "the first," and build you "the first," and bring you "the first." I shall reveal Myself to you as "the First," for it is written of Me *I the Lord*

13. See Sanh 4:3-4.

*am the first, I the last—I am He*¹⁴ (Isa. 41:4); and will inflict punishment in your behalf upon “the first”—upon the wicked Esau, of whom it is written *The first came forth ruddy* (Gen. 25:25); and build you “the first”—the Temple, of which it is written *Throne of glory on high from the first, counterpart of the place of our Sanctuary*¹⁵ (Jer. 17:12); and bring you “the first”—the king Messiah, of whom it is written *The first unto Zion will I give [who will say]: “Behold, behold them [returning to Zion],” and to Jerusalem a messenger of good tidings* (Isa. 41:27).

4. Another comment: *Take ye on the first day* (Lev. 24:40). These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: *Make me know the path of life; in Thy presence is fullness of joy* (Ps. 16:11). David said to the Holy One: Master of the universe, make me know which gate¹⁶ is open toward life in the world-to-come. R. Yudan and R. Azariah differed as to the reply God gave David. According to R. Yudan, the Holy One said to David: “Desirest thou life there? Look as from a watchtower to a life lived in fear of the Lord, since *The fear of the Lord prolongeth days*” (Prov. 10:27). According to R. Azariah, the Holy One replied: “Desirest thou life there? Look as from a watchtower for affliction [which brings understanding], since¹⁷ *Reproofs of affliction are the way to life*” (Prov. 6:23).

Another comment: *In Thy presence is fullness of joy*. Men who give themselves to the study of Scripture, Mishnah, Talmud, and Agadah are full of joy.

Another comment: *In Thy presence is fullness (šoba') of joy*. Do not read *šoba'*, “fullness,” but *šeḇa'*, “seven”—*seven joys in Thy presence*. The verse thus refers to the seven companies of

14. MT: *I, the Lord, who am the first, and with the last am the same*.

15. JV: *Thou throne of glory on high from the beginning, Thou place of our Sanctuary*. But see Kimḥi, and MTeh 30:1.

16. Malon, “lodging,” appears to be a misreading of *pilon*, “gateway.”

17. “*The fear of the Lord . . . since*”—parallels in Lev. Rabbah 30:2; PRKM, p. 405; and MTeh 16:12.

righteous men who will be received by the Presence, so that their faces will shine like the sun, like the moon, like the firmament, like the stars, like the lightnings, like *Shoshannim* ("lilies"),¹⁸ and like the lampstand in the Temple. Their faces shine like the sun? Yes, as Scripture says, *Clear as the sun* (Song 6:10). Their faces shine like the moon? Yes, as Scripture says, *Fair as the moon* (*ibid.*). Shine like the firmament? Yes, as Scripture says, *And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament* (Dan. 12:3). Shine like the lightnings? Yes, as Scripture says, *The appearance of them is like torches, they run to and fro like the lightnings* (Nahum 2:5). Shine like the stars? Yes, as Scripture says, *And they that turn the many to righteousness shall be as the stars for ever and ever* (Dan. 12:3). Shine like *Shoshannim*? Yes, as Scripture says, *For the leader; upon Shoshannim*.¹⁹ *A Psalm of David* (Ps. 69:1). Shine like the lampstand in the Temple? Yes, as Scripture says, *I have seen, and behold a lampstand all of gold*,²⁰ etc. (Zech. 4:2).

At Thy right hand stand those who give pleasure (*nē'imot*) (Ps. 16:11). David asked the Holy One: Is it possible to tell which company of the righteous is best loved and gives God the greatest pleasure? Two Amoraim differed as to the answer. Of the company standing at the right hand of God, one Amora maintained: It is the company of the righteous backed by the strength of Torah and good deeds. The other Amora maintained: It is the company of conscientious teachers of Bible and teachers of Mishnah²¹ who have scrupulously given instruction to children and hence will stand at the right hand of God. Either way, *At Thy right hand stand those who give pleasure*.²²

18. "like the stars . . . *Shoshannim* ('lilies')"—parallels in Lev. Rabbah 30:2; and PRKM, p. 405.

19. For the meaning of the term see MTeh 18:3, 44:2, and 45:3,5.

20. Since the statement *Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit* (verse 6) occurs in the context, the commentator assumes that the righteous are alluded to in the symbol of the lampstand. Cf. Piska 8.4.

21. "and teachers of Mishnah"—parallel in PRKM, p. 406.

22. Since teachers of Bible and Mishnah intoned the words of the texts which they used (Sof 3:10), the second Amora takes the word *nē'imot* to mean "those whose words of instruction are intoned."

Another comment: *In Thy presence are seven joys* (Ps. 16:11), these being the seven requirements for the Feast of Tabernacles: the four plants in the lulab cluster, the booth, the festal peace offering, and a joyous peace offering. Since the festal peace offering is enjoined, why have a joyous peace offering also? R. Abbahu replied by way of an analogy: Consider two contestants who appear before a judge. We do not know which is victorious until one of them carries off the palm. Then we know that he was adjudged the victor. So, too, when Israel and the counterparts in heaven of the princes of the earth's nations appear before the Holy One on New Year's Day, making charges against each other, at first we have no way of knowing which will be the victor. However, when Israel come forth from the presence of the Holy One with their palms and their ethrogim in their hands,²³ we know that Israel is adjudged the victor.²⁴ Therefore Moses charges Israel: *Take ye on the first day the fruit of goodly trees.*

5. *He hath regarded the prayer of the destitute man* (Ps. 102:18). R. Reuben said: We cannot easily fathom David's moods. There are times when he calls himself *king*, and there are times when he calls himself *the afflicted*. The explanation must be that when he foresaw and beheld that righteous men, men such as Asa, [Jehoshaphat], Hezekiah, Josiah, would issue from him, he called himself *king*, saying *Give the king Thy judgments, O God, and Thy righteousness unto the king's son* (Ps. 72:1). But when he foresaw and beheld that wicked men, men such as Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon, would issue from him, he thought of himself as destitute and called himself *the afflicted*, as when he said *A prayer of the afflicted, when he fainteth* (Ps. 102:1).

This verse R. Alexandri read as follows: *When a man delays*

23. "come forth from the presence . . . in their hands"—as in parallels in Lev. Rabbah 30:2, and PRKM, p. 406.

24. R. Abbahu's analogy answers the question somewhat obliquely: The additional offering on Tabernacles is presented by way of celebrating the triumphant conclusion of the trial on New Year's Day.

his prayer (*Tēfillah*),²⁵ *he will be poor*. For example, a working-man who is busy watching throughout the day for his employer to go away for a while, thus delays saying his daily *Tēfillahs* to the very end of the times set for them.²⁶ [Accordingly R. Alexandri] takes the word *ʿtf*, usually read *fainteth* (*A prayer of the afflicted, when he fainteth*), to mean *delay*, as in the verse *On account of the delayings* (*ʿtfym*), *those [of the flocks which might have been Jacob's] were Laban's*²⁷ (Gen. 30:42), for, as R. Isaac bar Ḥaḳula used to say of this verse, how can the word *delayings* be construed except as a reference to Jacob's delays in saying his daily prayers?

[*He will regard the prayer of the destitute man, and not despise their prayer* (Ps. 102:18)]. Resh Lakish said: The beginning of this verse is not consistent with its conclusion, and its conclusion is not consistent with its beginning. Since the verse begins by saying *He will regard the prayer of the destitute man*, it should have concluded with "and not despise his prayer." On the other hand, since the verse concludes with *and not despise their prayer*, it should have begun with "He will regard the prayer of the destitute men." The inconsistency is explained by the fact that when David said *He will regard the prayer of the destitute man* he was referring to Manasseh king of Judah who was destitute in his lack of good deeds; and when David said *and not despise*²⁸ *their prayer* he was referring to the prayers of Manasseh's forebears in Manasseh's behalf. Hence it is written that "destitute" *Manasseh . . . prayed unto Him, and He was entreated* (*ʿtr*) *of him, and heard their prayers*²⁹ (2 Chron. 33:13). What is the literal meaning of *ʿtr*, "He was entreated"? That God let Himself be torn into, so that His mercy poured

25. There are set times for the morning and afternoon *Tēfillah*. See [Piska 49.1], and Glossary.

26. See Ber 2:4.

27. JV: *So the feeble were Laban's*. See MTeh 102:1.

28. "his prayer . . . when David said *and not despise*"—parallels in Lev. Rabbah 30:3, and PRKM, p. 407; and MTeh 102:3.

29. The prayer of David, for example, which he prayed when he saw that Manasseh would issue from him. MT: *his supplications*.

out.³⁰ *tr*, as R. Eleazar the son of R. Simeon pointed out, is a form of *'tyrth*, which in Araba is the way the Aramaic word *hwtrt*, "a hole torn in the earth," is pronounced. *And He brought him back to Jerusalem (ibid.)*. How did He bring him back? R. Samuel the son of R. Mani,³¹ citing R. Aḥa, said that God brought him back on a wind, for the word *hšyb* ("brought back") here suggests *mšyb* ("cause to blow"), as in the statement "Thou causest the wind to blow."³² [Having been brought back on a wind], *Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God (ibid.)*, and Manasseh exclaimed: Where there is judgment, there is a Judge.

R. Isaac began his discourse by saying that Ps. 102:18 is to be read *May He regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer*, and that it alludes to the generations in exile³³ which have neither king nor prophet, neither Urim nor Thummim, and have nothing left to them except prayer. Said David to the Holy One: Master of the universe, this prayer, which is all that the destitute have—do not despise it.

This shall be written for the generation to come; and a people that shall be created shall praise the Lord (Ps. 102:19). In David's saying to the Holy One, *This shall be written for the generation to come*, he meant that [Manasseh's being restored to Jerusalem proves that] God receives the penitent. And in saying *a people that shall be created shall praise Him*, he meant that³⁴ God creates anew each man that repents.

Another comment: The word *This* in *This shall be written for the generation to come* alludes to Hezekiah's generation which was on the brink of death.³⁵ And the words which follow, *a people that shall be created shall praise Him (ibid.)*, mean that the Holy One created them anew.

30. Cf. Piska 11:3, and PRKM, pp. 365–66.

31. Lev. Rabbah and PRK: "R. Samuel bar Jonah."

32. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 133.

33. R. Isaac reads the words *for the generation to come* which follow as "the last generation." So David Luria on Lev. Rabbah 30:3.

34. "that [Manasseh's being restored to Jerusalem proves that] God . . . he meant that" —parallels in Lev. Rabbah and PRK. See also Lev. Rabbah M, p. 698, n. 5.

35. See 2 Kings 18:17 ff.

Another comment: The word *This* in *This shall be written for the generation to come* alludes to Mordecai's and Esther's generation which was on the brink of death. And the words *a people that shall be created shall praise Him* mean that the Holy One created them anew.

Another comment: The word *This* in *This shall be written for the generation to come*³⁶ alludes to the present generations which are on the brink of death. And the words *a people that shall be created shall praise Him anew* mean that the Holy One will create us anew.³⁷ And what will He expect of us? That we will take the lulab cluster and the ethrog and praise the Holy One. Hence Moses charges Israel, saying to them *Take ye on the first day*, etc. (Lev. 23:40).

6. *Let the field exult, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood sing for joy* (Ps. 96:12). The word *field* in *Let the field exult* stands for the world, having the same sense here as in the verse where it is said of Cain and Abel that "they were in the field"³⁸ (Gen. 4:8). The phrase *all that is therein* refers to the world's inhabitants, as in the verse "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof" (Ps. 24:1). With regard to *then shall all the trees of the wood sing*, R. Aḥa said that the phrase *trees of the wood* usually refers to trees which do not bear fruit, but since the phrase is qualified by the word *all*, the reference is to trees which bear fruit as well as to those that do not.³⁹ Made up of plants which bear fruit and plants which do not is the lulab cluster—before whom is the one who holds it to sing with joy? *Before the Lord*, for, as the Psalm goes on to say, *He is come* (Ps. 96:13) on New Year's Day, and says again *He is come*

36. "And the words which follow . . . *the generation to come*"—parallels in Lev. Rabbah and PRK.

37. An alternative interpretation would start what follows as a new paragraph: "[To return to the theme of the trial in heaven between the princely counterparts of the earth's nations and Israel. After the trial's triumphant conclusion for Israel], what does God expect of us," etc. Cf. MTeh 102:3.

38. According to one tradition, they argued about dividing the world between the two of them. See Gen. Rabbah 22:7.

39. "usually refers to trees which do not bear . . . as well as to those that do not"—parallel in Lev. Rabbah.

(*ibid.*) on the Day of Atonement. To do what? *To judge the world with righteousness, and the peoples with equity*⁴⁰ (*ibid.*).

7. The verse beginning *I will wash my hands*⁴¹ in innocence (Ps. 26:6) implies by these words that the lulab cluster must be got through honest purchase, not through robbery. The words with which the verse concludes, *So will I compass Thine altar, O Lord* (*ibid.*), are to be read in the light of what is taught in a Mishnah: "On each [of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles] men circled about the altar once, reciting 'We beseech Thee, O Lord, save now! We beseech Thee, O Lord, make us now to prosper!'" (*ibid.* 118:25)" (Suk 4:5). After the verse beginning *I will wash my hands*, etc., the Psalm reads *That I may make the voice of thanksgiving to be heard* (Ps. 26:7), where *thanksgiving* refers to the festal thank offerings. The end of the verse, *and tell of all Thy wondrous works* (*ibid.*), refers to the recitation of the *Hallel* Psalms which tell of God's wondrous works in times gone by, in the present time, in the time of the Messiah, in the time of Gog and Magog,⁴² and in the time-to-come. Thus the Psalm *When Israel went out of Egypt* (Ps. 114:1) tells of God's wondrous works in times gone by; the Psalm *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory* (Ps. 115:1) tells of God's wondrous works in the present time; the Psalm *I love the Lord, because He hath heard my voice and my supplications* (Ps. 116:1) tells of God's wondrous works in the time of the Messiah; the words *Order the festal procession with boughs* [to celebrate what befell those who penetrated Jerusalem] *as far as the horns of the altar* (Ps. 118:27) refer to God's wondrous works in the time of Gog and Magog;⁴³ finally in the

40. MT: *in His faithfulness*.

41. The commentator takes the word *kappot* to mean "hand-shaped branches (or fronds) of palm trees."

42. The combined armies of the heathen nations under the leadership of Gog and Magog, barbarian tribes of the North (Ezek. 38-39), who will contend with the Messiah.

43. According to Zech. 14:2, Gog and Magog will succeed in reaching the center of Jerusalem where the altar was located. So interpreted in *Korban ha-'edah* on P.Meg 2:1.

same Psalm, the verse *Thou art my God, and I will praise Thee* (Ps. 118:28) refers to God's wondrous works in the time-to-come.⁴⁴

8. Another comment on the verse *And ye shall take you on the first day* (Lev. 23:40). Can the words *the first day* mean the first day of the month? No, for Scripture has fixed the day as *the fifteenth day of the seventh month* (Lev. 23:39). But why should Scripture have shifted over from counting by days in the month to counting by days in the festival? R. Mani of Shaab and R. Joshua of Siknin citing R. Levi replied as follows: The matter may be explained by a parable—the parable of a city which owed the king its tax. The king sent collectors to take up the money, but the people of the city would not pay what they owed the king. Thereupon the king said: “I will go myself and collect it.” When the people of the city heard that the king was on his way to collect the tax, the notables of the city went out to meet him a distance of ten parasangs and said to him: “O king, our lord, we acknowledge that we owe you money. But right now we have not the means to pay the entire amount. We entreat you, have pity on us.” The king, seeing that they were seeking a peaceful settlement with him, remitted a third of the sum the citizens owed. When the king came to within five miles of the city, the city councilors came out, prostrated themselves before him, and said: “O king, our lord, we have not the means to pay.” So the king remitted another third of the sum the citizens owed. Then when he entered the city, the very moment he entered it, the entire city, everyone in it, men and women, grownups and little ones, came out, prostrated themselves at his feet, and pleaded with him. The king said: “Suppose I ask no more than one part in four of what you owe.” They replied: “Our lord, we have not the means.” What did the king do? He remitted the entire amount and wrote off their debt in full. What did all the people of the city do then? They went, the grownups and the little ones,

44. “refers to God's wondrous works in the time-to-come”—parallels in Lev. Rabbah and PRK.

and brought myrtles and palm branches and sang praise to the king. The king said: "Let bygones be bygones; from this moment on we shall commence a new reckoning." The application of the parable is as follows: Throughout the days of the year, Israel sin. Then on New Year's Day the Holy One [goes up on His throne and] sits in judgment, as is written *God is gone up amidst the tremolo* (Ps. 47:6). What do the people of Israel do then? They gather and pray in synagogues, and after reciting the ten verses asserting God's sovereignty, the ten verses asserting God's remembrance of His creatures, and the ten verses alluding to the shofar [of revelation],⁴⁵ they blow the shofar. Thereupon the Holy One remits one third of the punishment for Israel's iniquities. Between New Year's Day and the Day of Atonement those men who are notable for their piety fast as they avow penitence. Thereupon the Holy One remits another third of the punishment for Israel's iniquities. Then when the Day of Atonement comes, all Israel fast as they avow penitence, men, women, and children. Indeed they avow complete penitence, for they put on white garments, even though they are bare of foot like the dead. They say to Him: Master of the universe, we are two things at once: in our white garments we are like the angels who are eternal, but bare of foot we are like the dead.

When the Holy One sees Israel resolved upon complete penitence, He forgives all sins and writes off Israel's debt to Him, as is written *For on this day shall atonement be made for you, to cleanse you*, etc. (Lev. 16:30). When Israel see that the Holy One has made atonement for them and has written off their debt, what do they do? During the four days between the Day of Atonement and the Feast of Tabernacles they go and fetch myrtles and willows and palm branches and build sukkahs and sing praises to the Holy One. The Holy One says to them: Let bygones be bygones. From this moment on commences a new reckoning. Today is to be the first day in the new reckoning of iniquities. As Scripture says, *On the first day* (Lev. 23:40).

45. See Piska 40.5, and n. 32.

SUMMARY

The Eighth Day Festival as
exemplifying God's gracious
dealing with Israel

Jews are grateful for what God gives them, unlike the heathen who, when given ease, blaspheme and revile God in His goodness to them. Moreover, the heathen observe holidays riotously, while Jews observe them peacefully. It is because of their exemplary conduct that after the seven days of Tabernacles the Jews are given an additional day, the Eighth Day Festival, to celebrate (Sec. 1).

The Eighth Day Festival exemplifies God's gracious dealing with Israel and hence the verse *The wicked borroweth, and payeth not, but the righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth* (Ps. 37:21) is cited. The different kinds of wicked are described: he who raises a hand against his fellow, he who borrows and does not repay, he who makes strife, he who is brazen-faced, the heathen nations who eat and drink and rejoice but say no blessing over the food. On the other hand, the righteous, such as Israel, after eating and drinking give the Grace after Meals, even as the Righteous One of the universe *dealeth graciously, and giveth*.

To illustrate God's gracious dealing, His distribution of festivals throughout the year is considered. He had intended to give to Israel a festival for every month during the summer, but on account of the business of the golden calf He deprived the months of Tammuz, Ab, and Elul of the festivals He had intended for them. To make up, however, for Israel's being deprived of the festivals He had intended them to celebrate during the three previous months, He assigned all three festivals for celebration during Tishri, the following month. Then God said: Since Tishri makes up for the other months and has not been given a festival of his own, let him have his own day—the Eighth Day Festival (Sec. 2).

Many things—prayer, turning in repentance to God, charity, a

change of name, a change in conduct, a change of residence, and fasting—can avert a harsh decree of God's. The offerings made on the Eighth Day Festival intercede on Israel's behalf even against a decree as harsh as the withholding of rain (Sec. 3).

In further exposition of the reasons for the Eighth Day Festival's being so named, Israel's prayer to God, *Give a portion [of prosperity] because of seven and also because of eight* (Eccles. 11:2), is cited: seven refers to the Sabbath, and eight to the eight days of circumcision; seven refers to the seventh generation from Abraham which Moses circumcised, and eight refers to the eighth generation from Abraham which Joshua circumcised; seven refers to the seven days of Passover, and eight to the eight festal days that are made up of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day that comes right after; seven refers to the seven days of menstruation during which Israel refrain from sexual intercourse, and eight to the eighth day after the birth of a child, the day on which the child is circumcised; and finally, seven refers to the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, and eight to the Eighth Day Festival (Sec. 4).

Another reason for the Eighth Day Festival: Because God regards Himself as glorified by the sacrifices brought by a humble man and hence takes delight in the offerings brought by Israel, He charged Israel to celebrate the Eighth Day Festival for His glory and delight (Sec. 5).

The Eighth Day Festival is a festival in its own right. Special lots are cast to determine what priests are to perform the various ceremonies in its celebration. It has its own proper sacrifice, its own proper Psalm, and its own proper benediction. There are regulations concerning the kiddush on the eve of the Eighth Day Festival and the manner in which one may eat in the sukkah on the eve of the festival.

The word '*Ašeret*', the Hebrew name for the festival, suggests that God and Israel are drawn together, and accordingly the season of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day Festival in particular are considered to be the right time to ask God for rain (Sec. 6).

While the Feast of Tabernacles brings Israel to make offerings in behalf of the nations of the earth, the Eighth Day Festival is a day of rejoicing solely for Israel and God, a day when Israel rejoice both in God and in His Torah (Sec. 7).

Some day the Temple will be rebuilt and again the keeping of such ordinances as the offerings in the Temple and the tithes will be observed, in fulfillment of the promise *Ye that cleave to the Lord your God are alive every one of you this day* (Deut. 4:4) (Sec. 8).

*On the Eighth Day, ye shall have
a solemn assembly* (Num. 29:35).¹

1. These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord, Thou hast increased the nation; Thou art glorified: O that Thou wouldst remove far all the ends of the earth* (Isa. 26:15). *Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord*: When Thou gavest a son to a Jew, he circumcises him on the eighth day. When Thou gavest him a house, he fixes a mezuzah upon it. When Thou gavest him a roof, he builds a parapet around it.² But when Thou gavest ease to the wicked Pharaoh, did he in gratitude address Thee as Lord? Rather did he not blasphemously and revilingly say, *Who is the Lord, that I should hearken unto His voice?* (Exod. 5:2). When Thou gavest ease to the wicked Sennacherib, did he perhaps address Thee as Lord? Rather did he not blasphemously and revilingly say, *Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?* (2 Kings 18:35). Thou gavest ease to Nebuchadnezzar. Did he perhaps address Thee as Lord? Rather did he not blasphemously and revilingly say, *Ye shall be cast . . . into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hands?* (Dan. 3:15).

Another comment: *Thou hast increased the nation*, etc. Thou gavest ease to David, and so he blessed Thee: *Wherefore David blessed the Lord before all the congregation* (1 Chron. 29:10).

1. Num. 29:35 ff. is the lesson for *Šemini 'Āseret*, the Eighth Day Festival which follows upon the conclusion of the Feast of Tabernacles.

2. See Deut. 22:8.

Thou gavest ease to Solomon, and so he blessed Thee: *Blessed be the Lord, that hath given rest unto His people Israel* (1 Kings 8:56). Thou gavest ease to Daniel, and so he blessed Thee: *Daniel spoke and said, Blessed be the name of God* (Dan. 2:20).

O that Thou wouldst remove far all the ends of the earth. R. Levi commented: Thou didst scrutinize those who are near Thee and didst scrutinize those who are far from Thee. Bring nearer those who are near to Thee: ³ *Let the Lord be nigh unto all them that call upon Him* (Ps. 145:18). And remove farther off those who are far from Thee: *Let the Lord be far from the wicked* (Prov. 15:29).

Another comment: *Thou hast increased the nation*, etc. It is the way of the nations of the world that when Thou givest a son to one of their people, he disguises the circumcision [if the child is born so marked].⁴ But it is the way of Israel that when Thou givest a male child to one of them, he circumcises him on the eighth day; and he redeems him after thirty days if the child is a first-born.⁵ And when the child grows up, he takes him to synagogues and to schools where every day they bless the Lord and say, "Bless ye the Lord who is to be blessed."⁶

Another comment: *Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord.* It is the way of the nations of the earth that when Thou givest them holidays, they eat and drink and carouse,⁷ and go into their theatres and circuses and provoke Thee by their revelry. But it is the way of Israel that when Thou givest them holidays, they eat and drink and rejoice and go into synagogues and schools, and increase the number of prayers, and increase the number of additional offerings, and increase the number of regular offerings. Therefore Scripture says, *On the Eighth Day, ye shall have [an additional] solemn assembly.*

2. Another comment: *On the Eighth Day.* These words are to be considered in the light of the verse *The wicked borroweth,*

3. "Bring nearer those who are near to Thee"—Parma MS.

4. [That is, he has his son's foreskin restored by surgery. L. N.]

5. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 1034.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

7. "carouse"—FT; Parma MS: "rejoice."

and payeth not, etc. (Ps. 37:21). R. Isaac said: There are three sorts of men who are called wicked, namely, he who raises a hand against his fellow, he who borrows and does not repay, and he who makes strife. And whence the proof that he who even raises a hand against his fellow is to be called wicked? The verse which says, *And he said to the wicked: "Wherefore wouldst thou smite thy fellow?"* (Exod. 2:13). The verse does not say, "Wherefore didst thou smite thy fellow?" but *Wherefore wouldst thou smite?*—that is, the verse terms wicked that man who has not yet smitten his fellow, but means to smite him. R. Samuel bar Tanḥum reported: I stated this inference in the presence of R. Tanḥuma, and he said to me: He who is brazen-faced is also called wicked, for it is written *A wicked man hardeneth his face* (Prov. 21:29). And whence the proof that he who borrows and does not repay is to be called wicked? The verse which says, *The wicked borroweth, and repayeth not* (Ps. 37:21). And whence the proof that he who makes strife is to be called wicked? The verse concerning Korah and his band which says, *Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men* (Num. 16:26).

Another comment: *The wicked borroweth*, etc. By *wicked* are meant those nations of the earth who eat and drink and rejoice but say no blessing over the food. By the words *But the righteous, when dealt with graciously, gives*⁸ (Ps. 37:21) are meant Israel who eat and drink and give the Grace after Meals.

Resh Lakish said: You find that after the Holy One, blessed be He, gives to a righteous man what had been sought of Him by the righteous man, He then returns and by His own wish will graciously give him even more. Hence it is written *But the Righteous dealeth graciously, and giveth*.

R. Levi said: What God intended was this—to give to Israel a festival for every month during the summer: Passover in Nisan, the minor Passover⁹ in Iyar, Pentecost in Sivan. But on account

8. JV: *The righteous dealeth graciously*. But in this comment, the verb *hwnn*, "dealeth graciously," is apparently taken in a passive sense, "when dealt with graciously, gives [grace to God]."

A man who eats and drinks without a blessing is said to be an embezzler. See MTeh 16:1.

9. See Num. 9:10 ff.

of the transgressions and evil deeds that blackened Israel's hands when they made the golden calf,¹⁰ God took away the festivals He had intended for¹¹ the months of Tammuz, Ab, and Elul. He had the following month, Tishri, make up, however, for Israel's being deprived of the festivals He had intended them to celebrate during the three previous months, by celebrating the three festivals within Tishri's span: New Year's Day to make up for the missing festival in Tammuz; the Great Fast to make up for the missing festival in Ab; the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles to make up for the missing festival in Elul. Then said the Holy One, blessed be He: Since Tishri makes up for the other months and has not been given a festival that is his own, let him be given his own day. Hence Israel is charged: *On the Eighth Day, ye shall have [an additional] solemn assembly.*

3. <On the Eighth Day, etc.> *In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God hath made even the one as well as the other, etc.* (Eccles. 7:14). R. Abba bar Kahana said: When a happy day befalls you, take advantage of it at once, for it is written *In the day of prosperity be joyful*. But when a day of adversity fells you, *consider* how best to repent, so as to be delivered from the evil of the day.

R. Yudan said in the name of R. Eliezer: Three things—prayer, turning in repentance to God, and charity—avert a harsh decree, as is indicated in a single verse wherein all three are specifically referred to: *If My people, upon whom My name is called, shall humble themselves, and pray* (2 Chron. 7:14). Here the word *pray* refers to prayer; the next words in the verse, *and seek My face* (*ibid.*), refer to acts of charity, as when Scripture says, "As for me, I shall behold Thy face through charity" (Ps. 17:15); the following words in the verse, *and turn from their evil way*¹² (*ibid.*), refer to turning in repentance to God. And

10. On the Seventeenth of Tammuz, after which Israel remained in disgrace until the tenth of Tishri, on which day God pardoned Israel's sin. See Piska, 26.6; B.Ta 28b, and Rashi on B.Ta 30b.

11. "God took away the festivals He had intended for"—Parma MS.

12. "way"—Parma MS; MT: "ways."

with regard to the practice of the three, how does the verse conclude? *Then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their Land (ibid.).*

R. Hunya said in the name of R. Joseph: A change of name or a change in conduct can also avert a harsh decree. A change of name, as is shown by the instance of our father Abraham: *Neither shall thy name any more be called Abram, but thy name shall be Abraham (Gen. 17:5).* Abram as Abram could not beget children, but when renamed Abraham he could beget them. A like instance: *As for Sarai thy wife, thou shalt not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall her name be (Gen. 17:15).* Sarah as Sarai could not bear children, but when renamed Sarah she could bear them. That a change in conduct can avert a harsh decree may be seen from what happened to the people of Nineveh: *And God saw their works that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which He said He would do unto them (Jonah 3:10).*

And some say: A change of residence also can avert a harsh decree, as may be seen from what happened to our father Abraham after *The Lord said unto Abram: "Get thee out of thy country" (Gen. 12:1).*

R. Mani said: A fast also, as is said *The Lord answer thee in the day of self-mortification (Ps. 20:2).* Apropos of fasting, R. Hama bar Gurya said in the name of R[ab]:¹³ Fasting does away with a bad dream, even as fire does away with tow. And R. Joseph said: If the bad dream comes on the Sabbath day itself, one is permitted to fast even on the Sabbath.

God hath made even the one as well as the other (Eccles. 7:14). That is, the Holy One, blessed be He, made righteous men as well as wicked ones, as Scripture tells: *And after that came forth his brother, and his hand had hold on Esau's heel (Gen. 25:26).* R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiyah stated in the name of R. Simon that not <even the thinness of a caul>¹⁴ separated Esau

13. So parallels in B.Ta 12b and PRKM, p. 426.

14. So parallel in PRKM, p. 426. Parma MS: "no space at all." See also MTeh 18:32.

and Jacob, and yet the one came out a righteous man and the other a wicked man. Why does the Holy One, blessed be He, create righteous men and wicked men? In order that the ones should atone for the others,¹⁵ as is indicated by the verse, *God hath set the one over against the other*.

Another comment: *In the day of prosperity be joyful* (Eccles. 7:14). R. Tanḥum the son of R. Ḥiyya said: In the day of your fellow man's prosperity be joyful. *And in the day of adversity consider (ibid.)* how to do him a kindness.

Do what the mother of R. Tanḥum the son of R. Ḥiyya used to do. She would set out on a day to buy one pound of meat, but she would end up buying two pounds on her son's account, one for him and one for the poor. But why does the Holy One, blessed be He, create poor people and rich people? In order for them to draw sustenance from each other,¹⁶ as is indicated by the verse *God hath made even the one as well as the other, etc.*

In another comment, the verse is read *In the day meant for rejoicing, be joyful*. R. Aḥa said: On the day when men rejoice because they are studying Torah and obeying its precepts, on that day you be joyful for the same reason,¹⁷ *so that in the day of adversity thou wilt be one who beholds*—that is, when the day arrives, the day of which it is written *The sinners in Zion are afraid* (Isa. 33:14), you will be among those who behold the punishment of the sinners rather than among those who are beheld, you will be among the spectators rather than among the gladiators;¹⁸ you will be among those of whom it is written *And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have rebelled against Me* (Isa. 66:24), and not among those of whom it is written *For their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh (ibid.)*.

15. See [Piska 51.2], end.

16. The poor benefiting from the charity they receive, and the rich acquiring merit by the charity they give.

17. See PRKM, pp. 426–27.

18. See Lieberman, *GJP*, p. 38, n. 51a.

Why did the Holy One, blessed be He, create Gehenna and the Garden of Eden? So that one can behold the other. How much space is there between them? R. Johanan said: The breadth of a wall. R. Ḥanina said: The breadth of a hand. But the Rabbis said: The two are right up against each other.

According to R. Levi, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: My children, those offerings which I caused to be prescribed in the Torah, be heedful of them: you have no better intercessor than the offerings for the bringing down of rain. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Moses to say to Israel: *On the Eighth Day, ye shall have a solemn assembly.*¹⁹

4. <Another comment: *On the Eighth Day*, etc. (Num. 29:35).> *Give a portion [of prosperity] because of seven, and also because of eight* (Eccles. 11:2). As to what the two numbers mean, R. Eleazar, R. Nehemiah, and R. Joshua differed. R. Eleazar said: The words *Give a portion [of prosperity] because of seven* contain an allusion to the Sabbath, of which it is written "And it came to pass because of the seventh"²⁰ (1 Kings 18:44). The words *and also because of eight* contain an allusion to the eight days of circumcision, of which it is written "Elijah . . . put his face between his knees"²¹ (1 Kings 18:42). These two verses from Kings intimate that Elijah said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, even if Israel have fulfilled no

19. In his *Novellae* on Eccles. Rabbah 7:14, David Luria suggests that the commentator may take the expression *In the day of rejoicing* to refer to the Eighth Day Festival, through the observance of which Israel are saved from the evil days of drought. Or the commentator may regard the saying *God also hath set the one over against the other* as meaning that over against the withholding of rain ('syrah) God set an additional day of "holding of oneself" ('srt) in the presence of God.

20. JV: *at the seventh time*. However, the previous verse mentions that at Elijah's bidding the lad was to go up seven times and look toward the sea for a sign of rain; and so the next verse might have read "at the last time" and not *at the seventh time*. Therefore F. Eleazar takes Scripture's use of *the seventh* as an allusion to the Sabbath, the merit of which Elijah invoked in his appeal for rain.

21. The expression "between his knees" is construed as meaning that in his appeal for rain Elijah invoked the merit of circumcision.

commandments other than those concerning the Sabbath and circumcision, the merit of these two is such as to have Thee send down the rain because of them.

R. Nehemiah said: The words *Give a portion [of prosperity] to seven* allude to the generation which Moses circumcised—the seventh generation [from Abraham]. The words *and also because of eight* refer to the generation which Joshua circumcised—the eighth generation [from Abraham].²² The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Joshua: Israel's master, Moses, circumcised them in the seventh generation from Abraham, and thou didst circumcise them in the eighth, as is said *At that time the Lord said unto Joshua: "Make thee knives of flint, and circumcise again the children of Israel the second time* (Josh. 5:2), and bring them into the covenant." The words *the second time* intimate that God was saying, "Circumcise them once again; thou wilt not have to circumcise them a third time, [for hereafter they will perform the rite of circumcision for themselves]." ²³

R. Joshua said: The words *Give a portion [of prosperity] because of seven* allude to the seven days of Passover. The words *and also because of eight* allude to the eight festal days that are made up of the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles and the Eighth Day Festival that comes right after them. By the words *and also* is meant that we entreat Thee because of Pentecost, New Year's Day, and the Day of Atonement as well as because of the other festal days to *Give a portion [of prosperity]*.²⁴

R. Simon interpreted the verse as alluding to two of the princes—one a son of Ephraim and the other a son of Manasseh—who were given the honor of bringing offerings at the dedication of the Tabernacle's altar in the wilderness. The words *Give a portion [of prosperity] because of seven* refer to the first prince

22. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kohath, Amram, Moses, and Joshua. These two circumcisions were regarded as crucial in Israel's history. But for them, Israel would not have been freed from Egypt, nor been able to enter the Land of Israel. During the years in the desert, the cooling north wind did not blow; and so circumcisions could not be performed. See Ginzberg, *Legends*, 4, 7, and notes; and Gen. Rabbah 46:9.

23. See Mek, 3, 204-05.

24. *And* alone would have sufficed; the addition of *also* implies, to R. Joshua, that the preceding three holidays are referred to as well.

of whom Scripture says, *On the seventh day . . . the prince <of the children of Ephraim> (Num. 7:48); and the words and also because of eight* refer to the second prince of whom Scripture says, *On the eighth day . . . the prince of the children > of Manasseh*²⁵ (Num. 7:54).

R. Azariah said in the name of R. Judah the son of R. Simon:²⁶ The words *Give a portion because of seven* allude to the period of the priests' preparation for serving in the Tabernacle—*He shall consecrate you seven days*, etc. (Lev. 8:33), says Scripture. And the words *and also because of eight* allude to the eighth day when the priests began to serve in the Tabernacle—*And it came to pass on the eighth day that Moses called Aaron*, etc. (Lev. 9:1), says Scripture.

R. Judah bar Simon took the words *Give a portion because of seven* as alluding to the seven days of menstruation during which Israel refrain from sexual intercourse, and he took the words *and also because of eight* as alluding to the eighth day after the birth of a child, the day on which the child is circumcised. Accordingly, in construing the verse, he took it that the Holy One, blessed be He, was saying: "If thou refrain from sexual intercourse during the seven days of menstruation, then I shall give thee a male child whom thou wilt circumcise on the eighth day," for in the very next verse after the one concerning menstruation, Scripture says, *And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised* (Lev. 12:3).

R. Levi said: The words *Give a portion because of seven* refer to the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles; and the words *and also because of eight* are understood by reference to *On the Eighth Day, ye shall have a solemn assembly* (Num. 29:35).

5. <Another comment: *On the Eighth Day, ye shall have*, etc. (Num. 29:35).> *For the Lord taketh pleasure in His people*, etc. (Ps. 149:4). R. Joshua of Siknin said in the name of R. Levi:

25. Though Ephraim and Manasseh were descended from one Tribe-father, Joseph, each was nevertheless given the right to bring his particular offering on a particular day during the period of the Tabernacle's dedication.

26. The words "as alluding to a menstruant woman," which follow in Parma MS, are deleted, as in FT.

The Holy One, blessed be He, takes pleasure in the offerings of Israel. The words *He adorneth the humble with His heeding*²⁷ (*ibid.*) mean that the Holy One, blessed be He, regards Himself as glorified by the sacrifice brought by a humble man. That *heeding* (yšw'h) here refers to God's heeding of sacrifices, is shown by the verse *And the Lord gave heed*²⁸ (yš') *unto Abel and his offering* (Gen. 4:4). <And since the Lord takes pleasure in the offerings of Israel, therefore Moses charged Israel *On the Eighth Day*, etc.>

6. <Another comment: *On the Eighth Day*, etc.> Though the Eighth Day comes right after the seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles, it is a festival in its own right. Special lots are cast to determine what priests will perform the various ceremonies in its celebration.²⁹ It has its own proper sacrifice, its own proper Psalm, and its own proper benediction. R. Abin said: With regard to all the other days in the Feast of Tabernacles Scripture says, *And on the day* (Num. 29:17, 20, 23, 26, 29, 32), indicating by *and* the consecutiveness of the days, but with regard to the Eighth Day Scripture says simply: *On the . . . day* (Num. 29:35). Hence we know that the Eighth Day is a festival in its own right.³⁰ As to the lots for various ceremonies performed by the priests, R. Jose said, we are taught the following in a Mishnah: "On the Eighth Day they cast lots as they do at the other feasts" (Suk 5:9). As to its proper sacrifice, Scripture says, *one bullock, one ram*,³¹ etc. (Num. 29:36). <As to its proper benediction>, R. Illa said: It is required that on the Eighth Day the blessing "Thou . . . hast enabled us to reach this season"³² be said.³³

27. JV: *with salvation*.

28. JV: *had respect*. In Gen. Rabbah 22:6 the comment is that God was pleased with Abel.

29. See Yoma 2:2 and Suk 5:6.

30. And during it, dwelling in booths is not required. See Tos Suk 4:17; B.Suk 48a, and Rashi.

31. In contrast to the seven bullocks, two rams, and fourteen lambs offered up on the seventh day of the Feast of Tabernacles. See Num. 29:32.

32. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 810.

33. The words "As to its proper Psalm, as to its proper benediction," which follow here in Parma MS margin, are deleted, with FT.

In a Mishnah we read: "It is required that the [rites of the] sukkah continue for a full seven days. Thus after a man has finished eating [the last meal of the Feast],³⁴ he should not pull down the sukkah at once, but should bring down³⁵ its furnishings in the afternoon, or even later, because of the honor due to the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles" (Suk 4:8). R. Abba bar Kahana [and] R. Ḥiyya bar Ashi said in the name of Rab: [If a man wishes to eat in his sukkah on the Eighth Day], he is required to invalidate the sukkah in one way or another³⁶ sometime during the seventh day. R. Joshua ben Levi said: Of such a man it is only required that on the eve of the Eighth Day he say its proper kiddush³⁷ in his house [and not in the sukkah].³⁸

And R. Jacob bar Aḥa said in the name of Samuel: If a man says kiddush in one house and then decides to eat his meal in another house, he must say the kiddush a second time.

R. Aḥa bar Ḥanina said in the name of R. Hoshaiah: In the event that a man's sukkah is pleasing to him, he may say in his house on the eve of the Eighth Day Festival its proper kiddush, and then return to his sukkah to eat his meal, without having to say the kiddush again.

R. Abin pointed out that Samuel's teaching may be construed as being in agreement with R. Ḥiyya's,³⁹ and R. Hoshaiah's teaching in agreement with R. Joshua ben Levi's.⁴⁰

34. On the morning of the seventh day of Tabernacles.

35. Since the booths were often built on top of the flat roofs of houses, the term "bring down" is used.

36. By diminishing the sukkah's size (see *Qorban ha-'eḏah* on P.Suk 4:5); or by removing a palm branch from it (see PRKB, 194b). In this way the man makes it clear that he is not observing the Feast of Tabernacles for eight days.

37. See Hertz, *APB*, p. 808.

38. And so there is no need to make the sukkah invalid, inasmuch as the kiddush in the house has already marked the Eighth Day's distinctiveness.

39. Who required that during the seventh day of Tabernacles the sukkah be invalidated. Hence a man who goes into the sukkah to eat must say the kiddush a second time. Since the sukkah is partly dismantled, it would not appear that he intends using it for more than seven days.

40. R. Joshua ben Levi does not require invalidating the sukkah on the seventh day of Tabernacles. Hence saying the kiddush in the sukkah, on the eve of the eighth Day Festival, would make it appear that he intends to continue using the sukkah after the seventh day.

R. Mani said: In truth, there is no difference of opinion between Samuel and R. Joshua ben Levi. What Samuel said applies to a man who intends to eat in one house, [but then goes and eats in another]. And what R. Joshua ben Levi said applies to a man who does not intend to eat in the house in which he is saying the kiddush.⁴¹

[As to the meaning of *‘Āseret*, the name of the Eighth Day Festival], R. Yudan said in the name of R. Isaac: As long as Jews draw together for the celebration of festivals in synagogues and houses of learning, the Holy One, blessed be He, by His presence, shows that He is drawn to them. And the proof? The words spoken by Manoah to the angel: *I pray thee, let us draw (‘aṣar) thee to us, that we make ready a kid for thee* (Judg. 13:15).

But R. Haggai, in the name of R. Isaac, did not agree with R. Yudan, saying: As long as Jews collect in synagogues and in houses of learning, the Holy One, blessed be He, by His presence, shows that He collects with them. And the proof? *I collected constantly*⁴² [with my fellows], O Lord, and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry (Ps. 40:2). R. Alexandrai said: In this connection, consider the parable of a king to whom came an occasion for rejoicing. During the subsequent seven days of feasting, his royal consort kept hinting to the people of the palace, saying: "Now is the time, while the king is rejoicing, to get at him for satisfaction of your needs." When they did not see what she was hinting at, the royal consort herself got on their account an additional day of feasting from the king. Even so the Torah keeps steering Israel to their opportunity by hinting to them: "Ask for rain." You can see for yourself that the Torah is doing so by noting the variation in spelling of certain words in the following verses that specify the drink offerings for the Feast of Taber-

41. "eat in one house . . . in the house in which he is saying the kiddush." So apparently Parma MS. See Lieberman's note in PRKM, p. 475. FT: "eat in another house. And what R. Joshua ben Levi said applies to a man who does not intend to eat in another house."

42. JV: *I waited patiently*. But *kwh* may mean either "wait" or "gather, collect."

nacles: The verse prescribing the drink offerings for the second day, uses the word *nškyhm* (*their drink offerings*)⁴³ (Num. 29:19); the verse prescribing the drink offerings for the sixth day uses the word *wnskyh* (*the drink offerings thereof*)⁴⁴ (Num. 29:31); and the verse prescribing them for the seventh day, uses the word *kmšptm* (*after the ordinance thereof*)⁴⁵ (Num. 29:33). The variations in spelling indicated by the letter *mem* at the end of the first word, by the letter *yod* within the second word, and by the letter *mem* at the end of the third word show what the Torah is hinting at, for the three letters together spell *mym* ("water")—in short, the Torah was hinting to Israel that during the Feast of Tabernacles was the right time to ask of God a pouring out of rain upon their fields. But since they did not see what the Torah was hinting at, the Torah itself got an additional day, the Eighth Day Festival, for them. Hence Torah charges Israel: *Let the Eighth Day be for you an [additional] solemn assembly.*

7. Another comment: *On the Eighth Day.* The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Israel: "My children, I know that during all seven days of the Feast of Tabernacles you have been occupied with offerings in behalf of the nations of the earth."⁴⁶ But let this day be a day of rejoicing solely for you and Me. I shall not ask you for too burdensome an offering—only one bullock and one ram." When Israel heard this, they began praising the Holy One, blessed be He, saying *This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it* (Ps. 118:24). R. Abin said: From the words *be glad in it* we could not tell whether we were to rejoice in the day or in the Holy One, blessed be He.⁴⁷ But when Solomon came, he made it clear: *We will be glad and*

43. The usual formula is *the drink offering thereof*, as in Num. 29:21, 25, 28.

44. The usual formula is *the drink offering* (singular) *thereof*, as in Num. 29:16, 23, 26, etc.

45. The usual formula is *after the ordinance*, as in Num. 29:18, 20.

46. The 70 bullocks offered during Tabernacles were offered in behalf of the 70 nations of the earth.

47. The Hebrew *bw* may be rendered "in it" or "in Him."

rejoice in Thee (bk) (Song 1:4). *In Thee*—in Thee who deliverest us. R. Isaac said, however: What Solomon meant by *bk* (*in Thee*) was the twenty-two letters which Thou, O God, didst use in the writing of the Torah, the letter *bet* equaling two, and the letter *kaf* equaling twenty.

8.⁴⁸ *These ye shall offer unto the Lord in your appointed seasons* (Num. 29:39). R. Hanina said in the name of R. Tanḥum bar Yudan: Scripture does not say here of the offerings “These ye have offered,” but says *These ye shall offer*. The Torah is thus saying to Israel by way of a hint that there will be a second time [for such offerings, the time when the Temple is rebuilt].

R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Abba bar Kahana: It is written *Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in its season from year to year* (Exod. 13:10). The Torah is thus saying to Israel by way of a hint that there will be a second time [for the keeping of the ordinance of Passover, the time when the Temple is rebuilt].

R. Judah the son of R. Simon said: Scripture entreats God: *Look forth from Thy holy habitation, from heaven* (Deut. 26:15). What does the next verse say? *This day the Lord thy God commandeth thee to do these statutes and ordinances* (Deut. 26:16). Now what does the one verse have to do with the next? ⁴⁹ This: As long as Israel do the will of God and continue, [even after the destruction of the Temple], to pay their tithes as is proper, so that each one of them is able to say, [*In payment*] *I have removed the hallowed things [—the tithes—] out of my house* (Deut. 26:13), then, as the Torah says to Israel by way of a hint: [Because God is looking forth from His holy habitation upon you], *Ye that cleave to the Lord your God are alive, everyone of you, this day* (Deut. 4:4).

48. This Section, which is not in FT, is in the Parma MS.

49. “What does the next verse say . . . do with the next”—parallel in PRKM, p. 434.

SUMMARY

Torah and the universe—dual
aspects of the glory of God

The verse *There was evening and there was morning, one day* (Gen. 1:5) is construed as referring to the first of the two one-thousand-year periods after creation, during which the wicked, spoken of figuratively as *evening*, and the righteous, spoken of figuratively as *morning*, were without the gift of Torah's light (Sec. 1).

When God turned to the making of the world, the Prince of darkness sought to have creation begin with him. But God rebuked him, saying "Get thee hence," and proclaimed the order of creation as indicated in the twelve signs of the Zodiac: the Ram, the Bull, the Twins, the Crab, the Lion, Virgo, the Balances, the Scorpion, the Archer, Capricorn, the Water Bearer, and the Fish. These signs signify not only the order of creation, but also the stages in every man's moral experience during his lifetime. The order of God's creation of the sun and the planets also symbolizes Israel's course through history. Thus, even as the Torah, heaven-given, declares the glory of God's ordering of creation, so the array in the firmament declares the glory of God's handiwork—the Torah (Sec. 2).

1. . . . *And there was evening and there was morning, one day* (Gen. 1:5). By *one day* is meant the first of the two one-thousand year periods after the creation [which were without the light of Torah].¹ That a thousand years is but a day in the sight of the Holy One, blessed be He, is shown by the verse *A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday* (Ps. 90:4). Hence, according to the verse from Genesis, both the wicked spoken of figuratively

1. The 6000 year scheme—2000 "emptiness," 2000 Torah, 2000 messianic age. See Moore, *Judaism*, 2, 351-52; and parallel in Bērešit Rabbāi, pp. 9-10, n. 5.

as *evening* and the righteous spoken of figuratively as *morning*, were without the gift of Torah's light.

2. When the Holy One, blessed be He, was about to create the world, He said to the Prince of darkness: "Get thee hence from Me, because I desire to begin creation with the light and the luminaries whence it comes." Thereupon the Prince of darkness said to himself: "If I listen to Him and have my darkness lighted up, I would at once become His slave for ever. It is better that I make myself out as not having heard Him so that I seem to be inadvertently, not deliberately, sinful."

Immediately the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked the Prince of darkness for his rebelliousness. Nevertheless other princes in heaven <proclaimed the Prince of darkness to be king over them>, and he in turn bestowed pavilions after pavilions upon them, as is said *Darkness bestowed pavilions to those round about him*,² *a gathering of waters* (2 Sam. 22:12)—that is, [since "darkness was upon the face of the deep" (Gen. 1:2)], all of these princes were gathered together as in one dark sea. But then the Holy One, blessed be He, rebuked them for their rebelliousness, and drop by drop, so to speak, the entire gathering was dispersed.³

When the Prince of darkness realized that the Holy One, blessed be He, had rebuked him, he proceeded to ask: "Master of the universe, why dost thou give being to light before Thou givest being to me?"⁴ The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "If thou dost not betake thyself hence, I shall rebuke thee so strongly this time as to have thee perish from the world." Thereupon the Prince of darkness asked: "After the light, what wilt Thou create?" "Thee." "And after me what wilt Thou create?" "The Twins of the Zodiac." The Prince asked: "Why the Twins of the Zodiac?" "Because the Twins are the sign for man, since man,

2. JV: *And He made darkness pavilions round about Him.*

3. Apparently the word *ḥšr*, previously rendered "gathering," is now given its other meaning, "distil, trickle forth."

4. After the earth was created—so asserts one tradition—the abyss sought to reach out in the form of a bull-calf's foot. See Job 40:19; and Piskas 20.2 and 36.1; *ʿAruḡaṭ hab-bošem*, 2, 242.

when I create him, will follow a dual course⁵ of light and darkness." The Prince asked: "Master of the universe, the sign for light⁶—what is its name?" "The Ram." "And my sign in the Zodiac—what is its name?" "The Bull." "Why?" "Because it is usual for lambs to be white and usual for bulls to be black. Moreover, the ram suggests Israel: 'A flock of rams, so scattered' (Jer. 50:17). And being white as lambs, Israel will study Torah which is light, and by means of Torah they will see light, as is said *For with Thee is the fountain of life; in Thy light we will see light* (Ps. 36:10)." "And when will Israel make use of Thy light?" "When the Messiah who is called bullock,⁷ as in the verse *His firstling bullock, the glory of light will be his* (Deut. 33:17), comes: at that time the Messiah will cast the nations of the earth into deep shadow, as is said *For, behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the peoples. But upon thee the Lord will arise* (Isa. 60:2)."

Then the Prince of darkness asked again, saying: "After the Twins what wilt Thou create?" God replied: "The Crab." "Why?" "Because, like a crab, man scrabbles together his possessions out of holes and cracks." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "The Lion, because after a man gathers up his possessions out of holes and cracks, he then becomes rich and thinks himself as powerful as a lion." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "Virgo, because after a man becomes rich and strong like a lion, he becomes as plump as a virgin." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "The Balances, for, being plump as a virgin, man is weighed in the balance." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "The Scorpion. Because when a man is weighed in the balance and iniquities are found in him, he is made to go down to Gehenna and is punished in the region where serpents and scorpions abound." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "The Archer with his bow. Because after going

5. [Rather, "Because the Twins are man and man (i.e. two men), whom I shall create to symbolize man's dual course"? L. N.]

6. The word *šwr*, "bull," is a typographical error for *'wr*, "light."

7. The Messiah named Menahem ben Amiel ben Joseph is so identified. See Pirke dē-Rabbi Eliezer, chap. 19; and Bērešit Rabbati, p. 252.

down to Gehenna and receiving the punishment due him, the sinner is forgiven all his iniquities, and like an arrow from the bow he is flung forth from Gehenna." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "Capricorn, because upon being flung forth from Gehenna, he romps about like a kid." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "The Water Bearer with his bucket, because after a man's iniquities are forgiven him, I splash pure water upon him so that he becomes pure." "And after that, what wilt Thou create?" "The Fish, because after man is purified, he inherits the world-to-come. Whereupon the evil eye⁸ can no more prevail over him than it can over a fish, nor can the [planet that rules the] hour of one's birth affect his destiny—then, only the [planet that rules the] present hour can affect it."

Why was the sun created first [as the only luminary]? Because it was intended that the same luminary illuminate the world, all of it, [by night as well as by day]. And after the sun, the double star, Mercury-Venus, was created. Foreseeing, however, that the generation of the flood would provoke Him [by sexual license], God separated Mercury and Venus so that each was by itself, instead of being entwined one with the other. Mercury came to symbolize Abraham who was to shine forth upon the world, all of it, like the brightest of stars. And then was created the moon, whose light, waning and waxing, symbolizes Israel.⁹ And then was created Saturn, [the Enslaver],¹⁰ symbolizing the nations of the earth who were to enslave Israel. And then was created Jupiter (*Šedeḳ*), to symbolize the strict justice (*šedeḳ*) that will be meted out to the nations of the earth. Finally was created Mars—the Red Star—as a symbol of the punishment He intends for the nations. How shall the nations be dealt with? They will fall into the red fire of Gehenna—to let them know this He created the Red Star.

The heavens declare the glory of God (Ps. 19:2)—that is, the Torah, heaven-given, declares the glory of God's ordering of

8. "the evil eye"—Bērešit Rabbati; FT: "iniquity."

9. See Piska 15.20.

10. A play on *Šabṭai*, "Saturn," and *Š'abḏai*, "the Enslaver."

creation. Indeed the Torah says of itself "When He established the heavens, I was there" (Prov. 8:27). On the other hand, *The firmament showeth His handiwork* (Ps. 19:2): that is, the firmament declares the glory of the Torah—the Tables of the Commandments, which are His handiwork, as is said "And the Tables were the work of God" (Exod. 32:16).¹¹

11. See parallels, Piska 20.2; and Bērešit Rabbati, pp. 11–12.

ABBREVIATIONS

Tractates of Mishnah, Tosefta, and Talmud

Ab	'Abot	Naz	Nazir
Ar	'Āraḳin	Neḏ	Nēḏarim
AZ	'Āboḏah Zarah	Neḡ	Nēḡa'im
BB	Baḅa Baṭra	Nid	Niddah
Bek	Bēkorot	Oh	'Ohalot
Ber	Bēraḳot	Or	'Orlah
Beṣ	Beṣah	Par	Parah
Bik	Bikkurim	Pes	Pēsaḥim
BK	Baḅa Ḳamma	RH	Roš haš-Šanah
BM	Baḅa Mēši'a	Sanh	Sanhedrin
Ed	'Eduyyot	Shab	Šabbat
Er	'Erubin	Shebu	Šebu'ot
Giṭ	Giṭtin	Sheḳ	Šēḳalim
Ḥaḡ	Ḥāḡiḡah	Sof	Sofērim
Ḥal	Ḥallah	Soṭ	Soṭah
Ḥul	Ḥullin	Suk	Sukkah
Ker	Kēriṭot	Ta	Ta'āniṭ
Ket	Kēṭubbot	Tam	Tamiḏ
Ḳid	Ḳiddušin	Tef	Tēfillin
Kil	Kil'ayim	Tem	Tēmurah
Mak	Makkot	Ter	Tērumot
Meḡ	Mēḡillah	Uḳṣ	'Uḳṣin
Men	Mēnaḥot	Yaḏ	Yaḏayim
Mid	Middot	Yeḅ	Yēḅamot
MK	Mo'eḏ Ḳaṭan	Zeb	Zēḅaḥim

B. prefixed to the name of a tractate indicates a reference to the Babylonian Talmud; P. indicates a reference to the Palestinian (Jerusalemite) Talmud; and Tos a reference to the Tosefta (ed. Zuckermann, Pasewalk, 1880; 2d ed., Jerusalem, 1937). Otherwise the reference is to tractates of the Mishnah.

Unless another edition is specified, the Midrash Rabbah used—of the Pentateuch as well as of the Five Scrolls—is the Wilno, 1878, edition.

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- APB *The Authorized Daily Prayer Book of the United Hebrew Congregations of the British Empire*, with a translation by Simeon Singer, 13th ed., London, 1925
- app. appendix
- '*Aruḡaṭ hab-bošem* Abraham ben Azriel [13th century], '*Aruḡaṭ hab-bošem*', ed. Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, 4 vols., Jerusalem, 1939–63
- '*Aruk* Nathan ben Jehiel of Rome [11th century], *Aruch Completum*, ed. Alexander Kohut, facsimile reprint, 8 vols., Vienna, 1926
- Asher, R. Asher ben Jehiel [ca. 1250–1328], Abstract of the Talmudic laws (printed as a supplement to the Babylonian Talmud)
- AV The Authorized version of the English Bible, first published in 1611
- B ed. Solomon Buber
- B. Babylonian Talmud
- b. *ben* (Hebrew) or *bar* (Aramaic), "son of"
- Ben-Yehudah Eliezer Ben-Yehudah, *Millon hal-lašon ha-'ibriṯ* (*Thesaurus totius hebraicitatis*), Berlin and Jerusalem, 1908–59
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- Cas Casanata MS 3324
- chap. chapter
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- EV English versions of Scripture (as distinguished from special interpretations made by a Rabbinic commentator)
- Fr Meir Friedmann
- Friedmann Notes and comments in his edition of PR
- FT Pēsiḳta Rabbati, ed. Meir Friedmann, Vienna, 1880
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- Hertz, *APB* *The Authorised Daily Prayer Book*, revised ed., by Joseph Herman Hertz, New York, 5714/1954
- HUCA* *Hebrew Union College Annual*
- Ibn Ezra Abraham ibn Ezra [1092-1167], *Commentary on the Bible*
- Jastrow Marcus Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 2 vols., London and New York, 1903
- JE* *The Jewish Encyclopedia*
- JQR* *The Jewish Quarterly Review*
- JV (Jewish Version) *The Holy Scriptures according to the Masoretic Text*, Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society of America, 5677/1917
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MSS Parma MS and Casanata MS

MT Masoretic text of Scripture

MTeh Midrash Tehillim, ed. Solomon Buber, [Wilno, 1891]; translated by William G. Braude, New Haven, 1959 (YJS, 13)

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Onkelos see Targum

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P Prague edition of Pěsikta Rabbati

P. Palestinian Talmud

Parma MS Parma MS 1240

PE Reference to a passage in which the Prague, Vienna, and Warsaw editions of the Pěsikta Rabbati agree, unless one of these editions is specifically excepted.

PH *The Pentateuch and Haftarahs*, ed. Joseph Herman Hertz, London, 1956

PR Pěsikta Rabbati

pr. preamble

PRK Pěsikta dē-Raḅ Kahāna

PRKB Pěsikta dē-Raḅ Kahāna, ed. Solomon Buber, Lyck, 1868

PRKM Pēsiḳta dē-Rab Kahāna, ed. Bernard Mandelbaum, 2 vols., New York, 1962

R. Rabbi

Rashi R. Solomon ben Isaac of Troyes [1040–1105], author of commentaries on the Hebrew Bible and on the Babylonian Talmud

REJ *Revue des Études Juives*

RV Revised version of the English Old Testament (first published in 1885)

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Sif Sifre, Sifra

Soncino tr. The English translations of the Babylonian Talmud (1935–52), the Midrash Rabbah (1939), and the Zohar (1931–34), issued by the Soncino Press in London

SPR The copy of the Prague edition of Pēsiḳta Rabbati, with marginal annotations based on the Parma MS. The volume is in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America

SPR₁ A brief commentary in the same volume in another hand

Strashun's Novellae Samuel Strashun [1794–1872], *Novellae* on Midrash Rabbah (in the Wilno, 1878, ed. of that Midrash)

Table of Scriptural Lessons The Table of Scriptural Lessons in *The Holy Scriptures*, Philadelphia, 5677/1917

Targum Ancient translations or paraphrases of the Bible into Aramaic. The most important of these is the translation of the Pentateuch that is ascribed to Onkelos, the Proselyte, a Mishnah Teacher of the first century.

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Ṭur 'Orah ḥayyim Jacob ben Asher [d. ca. 1340]. The first part of his Code of law

W Pēsikṭa Rabbati, Warsaw, 1893

Yalkuṭ The compilation or catena on Scripture known as Yalkuṭ Šimē'oni

Yēfeh to'ar Samuel ben Isaac Jaffe [16th century], Comments on Midrash Rabbah (in the Wilno, 1878, ed. of that Midrash)

YJS Yale Judaica Series

ZA Ephraim Zalman Margolioth [1762–1828], *Zera' 'Efrayim*, commentary on the Pēsikṭa Rabbati (in the Lemberg ed. of that Midrash; reprinted in the Warsaw ed.)

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had-Dēraṣoṭ bē-Yiśra'el, translated by Cha-
 noch Albeck, Jerusalem, 5707/1947

[] *Interpolation made for the sake of clarity
 or based on a parallel reading in another
 source*

< > *Insertion made by Friedmann in his ed. of
 the Pēsikta Rabbaṭi*

GLOSSARY

Ab

see Months

Adar

see Months

Afternoon Prayer (Minḥah)

recited from half an hour after midday until sunset, corresponding to the time set for the daily burnt offering of the afternoon

'Aḡaḏah (pl. *'Aḡaḏot*)

that part of Talmudic (and of later Rabbinic) literature which does not deal with legal matters

Altar

unless otherwise specified, refers to the Outer Altar, also known as the Altar of Burnt Offering (Exod. 35:6), situated in the courtyard of the Tabernacle or the Temple Court; upon it were burned all sacrifices except the incense, and were offered all sprinklings of blood except those of certain sin offerings

'Amidah (literally "standing")

see *Tēfillah*

Amoraim

literally "expounders, expositors"; Talmudic authorities who flourished about 200–500 c.e., and whose discussions are embodied in the Gemara

Analogy

making use of a similar expression occurring elsewhere in Scripture in order to apply to one subject a rule, characteristic, or concept already known to apply to another

Atbash (*'tbš*)

a method of interchanging the first letter of the Hebrew alphabet, *'alef*, with the last letter, *taw*; the second, *bet*, with the next to the last, *šin*; and so on

Baraita

an extraneous Mishnah, containing a Tannaitic tradition not incorporated in the Mishnah as collected by Rabbi Judah the Prince (ca. 200 c.e.), but cited in the Gemara, the Midrash, or the Tosefta

Benediction, seasonal

benediction ending with the words "who has kept us alive, and preserved us, and enabled us to reach the present time"; *see* Maimonides' Code, III, x, i, 3 (YJS, 14, 454-55) for the full text

Berabbi

an honorific title given to a Sage or scholar

Bible

the Hebrew Bible consists of three main groups: (1) the Law, i.e. the five books of the Pentateuch; (2) the Prophets, subdivided into Prior Prophets (Joshua through Kings) and Latter Prophets (Isaiah through Malachi); and the Writings (Psalms through Chronicles); *see also Oral Law*

Burnt offering

offered for sinful desire, for evil thoughts that come into one's mind; cf. Lev. Rabbah 7:3

Clean and unclean animals

cf. Lev. 11

Daily burnt offerings

two he-lambs were offered daily in the Temple, one in the morning and one in the afternoon, at dusk; cf. Num. 28:1-8

Day and night

In the Jewish system of time reckoning, the day begins with the preceding night; the night is counted from dusk to dawn, and the day from dawn to dusk or sunrise to sunset; a daylight hour means a twelfth part of the day as thus defined

Denar

a silver coin, worth a quarter of a *sela'* or six *ma'ah*, the latter being the smallest current silver coin

Diverse kinds

of seeds or plants, may not be sown together; of garment stuffs, may not be worn together; of cattle, may not be bred to each other; cf. Lev. 19:19; Deut. 22:9-11

Edom

a Rabbinic designation of Rome

Eighteen Benedictions (Šēmoneh 'ešreh)

see Tēfillah

Elul

see Months

Ephah

standard Biblical dry measure, equal to ten 'omer (Exod. 16:36) or three *se'ah*, approximately the contents of seventy eggs

'Erub

literally "intermingling, blending"; specifically, a symbolic act of "blending" several domains or limits together, for the purpose of making it lawful on the Sabbath to walk or transport things from one to the other

Esau

a Rabbinic designation of Rome

Ethrog

a species of citron (*Citrus medica* L.) used with the festive cluster on the Feast of Tabernacles; *see also* Lulab

Festal peace offering (hăḡiḡah)

brought on each of the pilgrimage festivals; cf. Deut. 16:16; Exod. 23:14-17; Hăḡ 1:1-2; Pes 6:3-4; and YJS, 4, 43-44, 49

First fruits

a portion of the first ripe fruits brought by the owner of the field to the Temple in thanksgiving and then consumed by the priests; *see* Deut. 26:1-11

Firstling

the male first-born of cattle and sheep, brought by the owner to the Temple as a hallowed offering consumed by the priests; *see* Num. 18:17, 18

Four Kingdoms

Babylonia, Media and Persia, Greece, and Rome, which kept Israel in subjection; cf. Dan. 7

Gemara

that part of the Talmud which contains the comments of the Amoraim upon the Mishnah

Habdalah

the Benediction of "Separation," recited at the close of the Sabbath or holy day

Haftarah

the selection from the Prophets read in the synagogue service after the lesson from the Pentateuch

Halakāh (pl. *Halakot*)

that part of Talmudic (and of later Rabbinic) literature which deals with legal matters

Hallel

Psalms 113-18, as used for liturgical recitation

Hanukkah

minor Jewish festival of eight days, beginning on the 25th day of Kislev, commemorating the rededication of the Temple by the Maccabees in 165 B.C.E.

Heave offering

a portion of the produce (about two percent on the average) which was given to the priests who alone were permitted to eat it; cf. Num. 18:8; Lev. 22:10; Deut. 18:4

Heave offering of the tithe

Out of the tithe which he received, the Levite was obliged to give a tenth part to the priest; in other words, one hundredth of the original produce harvested by the Israelite; cf. Num. 18:25-32

Heshvan

see Months

Holy spirit

the quickening of man's natural faculties by divine inspiration—a level of inspiration below that of prophecy, whereby a prophet receives divine communications in a supranatural manner; see Maimonides, *Guide*, 2:45.

Hours, Daylight

see Day and night

Immersion pool

must contain 40 *sē'ah* (approximately 60 gallons or 270 liters) of water, which may not be drawn, but must be taken directly from a river or spring, or must consist of rain water led straight into the bath (YJS, 8, 509-10)

Iyar

see Months

Jubilee year

the year concluding a series of seven Sabbatical cycles comprising 49 years; cf. Lev. 25:8-16

Kēri

the Masoretic instruction for reading, as opposed to the *kētiḇ*, the traditional spelling of Biblical words

Kētiḇ

the traditional spelling of Biblical words, as opposed to the *Kēri*, the Masoretic instruction for reading

Kiddush

the ceremony of drinking wine after a blessing in the synagogue or home, by which the advent of the Sabbath or festivals is sanctified

Kislev

see Months

Law, the

see Bible

Levite

(a) a descendant of the Tribe of Levi (see Num. 3:5 ff.);

(b) as contrasted to "priest" and "[lay] Israelite"

Log

a liquid measure said to be equal to the displacement of six eggs; cf. B. Er 83a

Lulab

the palm branch carried with the festive cluster during the Festival of Tabernacles—cf. Lev. 23:40; or, more generally, the cluster of palm branch, myrtle, and willow used with the ethrog on that festival

Maneh (mina)

a weight equal to 100 denar

Mezuzah

literally "doorpost" (Deut. 6:9); a piece of parchment bearing the verses Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21, enclosed in a cylinder and fastened to the righthand doorpost

Midrash

exposition or exegesis of Scripture

Mishnah (literally "teaching")

the collection of legal decisions of the Sages of the first two centuries C.E. (the Tannaim), edited and arranged into six orders by Rabbi Judah the Prince (ca. 200 C.E.); the Mishnah provides the text to which the Gemara is the commentary, the two together constituting the Talmud

Months

the Hebrew names of the months are as follows: Nisan, Iyar, Sivan, Tammuz, Ab, Elul, Tishri, Heshvan (Marheshvan), Kislev, Tebet, Shebat, Adar; in an intercalated year a thirteenth month, called 2nd Adar, is added

Musaf (Additional offering)

special offering for the Sabbaths, New Moons, and festivals brought in addition to the regular daily offerings; cf. Num. 28:9-31; after the destruction of the Temple, replaced by the Additional Prayer

Nazirite

one who vows to dedicate himself to the service of God; his vow implies (a) abstention from all products of the grapevine; (b) letting his hair grow; (c) avoidance of contact with a dead body (see Num. 6:2-8)

Nisan

see Months

Noachide Commandments

seven universal precepts held to be incumbent not only upon Israelites but also upon all the "sons of Noah," i.e. upon the whole human race; cf. Maimonides' Code, XIV, v, ix, 1 (YJS, 3, 230-31) and MTeh, 2, 417-18

'Omer

the sheaf of barley, also called the sheaf of waving, brought as an offering on the 16th day of Nisan; cf. Lev. 23:9-14

Oral Law

unlike the written Torah which Moses received at Sinai, the Oral Law or Torah, its authoritative exposition, was never meant to be committed to writing

Parasang

a distance of 8,000 cubits, or 4 miles

Parashah

a passage in Scripture which deals with a single topic

Peace offering

sacrifice betokening nearness and communion between God and man

Pisḳa

literally "a passage in Scripture designated as an annual lesson," or "a lesson in Scripture that is brief." In the translation of the Pesikta Rabbati the term is used as a synonym for chapter

Priestly watch

the priests and Levites were divided into 24 guards or watches,

each one of which was on duty for one week every half year; cf. 1 Chron. 24:4; Ta 4:2

Prophets

see Bible

Purim

the Feast of Lots, observed on the fourteenth day of Adar in commemoration of the salvation of the Jews in Persia; its full story is recorded in the Book of Esther

Rabbi

literally "my master"; a term of respect used in direct address by a disciple to his teacher, and generally by the public to a scholar known for his learning. It was only much later that the term assumed its present meaning of the spiritual leader of a Jewish community

Ram's horn

see Shofar

Sabbath limit

one may not walk on the Sabbath beyond the distance of 2,000 cubits from the city or place where one resides

Saboraim

principals and scholars of the Babylonian academies in the period immediately following that of the Amoraim

Sages

see Scribes

Sanhedrin

council, high court; the Great Sanhedrin, the Supreme Court consisting of 71 members; a Small Sanhedrin, a high court consisting of 23 members

Scribes

or Sages; the post-Biblical scholars dating back to Ezra the Scribe (ca. 440 B.C.); the term, however, is loosely used to apply to the Rabbis of the subsequent period who preserved and transmitted the Oral Law

Scripture

see Bible

Sheaf of barley

see 'Omer

Shebat

see Months

Sheḳinah

"the Presence" [of God], as a circumlocution when Scripture speaks of God's dwelling in a place, or removing from one, and the like

Shēma'

the name and the first word ("Hear [O Israel]!") of a group of passages from Scripture (Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41) which must be recited daily in the morning and in the evening

Shofar

ram's horn sounded on New Year's Day and on other occasions; cf. Num. 29:1; Lev. 25:9; the notes produced by it were the following: sustained note (*tēḳi'ah*), tremolo (*tēru'ah*), and broken note (*šēḥarim*)

Sivan

see Months

Sukkah

the booth used in observance of the Festival of Tabernacles

Talmud

the two collections of Rabbinic law and lore comprising Mishnah and Gemara; one, the Palestinian, also known as Jerusalem Talmud, redacted by the disciples of R. Johanan, ca. 300 C.E.; the other, the Babylonian, redacted by R. Ashi and Rabina, ca. 450 C.E.

Tammuz

see Months

Tannaim

authorities who are cited in the Mishnah and the Baraita and who flourished up to about the year 200 C.E.

Tebet

see Months

Tēfillah

the name of one of the principal prayers in the daily services, consisting on weekdays of 19 (originally 18) benedictions. Hence called also "Eighteen Benedictions" (*Šēmoneh 'éreh*), and, since it is usually recited while standing, *'Amidah* ("Standing [Prayer]")

Tefillin (phylacteries)

small leather cases, one worn on the arm and the other on the head during the recital of week-day prayers. Each case contains

parchment strips upon which are written four passages from Scripture: Exod. 13:1-10, 11-16; Deut. 6:4-9, 11:13-21

Tēḳi'ah

see Shofar

Tēru'ah

see Shofar

Tishri

see Months

Tithes (ma'aśer)

were of three kinds: the first tithe was given to the Levite in each of the first six years of the Sabbatical cycle; the second tithe was separated in the first, second, fourth, and fifth years of the cycle and was consumed by the owner in Jerusalem; the poor man's tithe was given to the poor in the third and sixth year of the cycle

Torah

see Bible

Tosefta

a collection of those legal decisions of the Tannaim which were not included in the Mishnah; redacted by R. Ḥiyya, disciple of Rabbi Judah the Prince

Urim and Thummim

the twelve precious stones set in the "breastplate of judgment," upon which were engraved the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Exod. 28:15-30); the letters served as an oracle

Writings

see Bible

TABLE OF SCRIPTURAL LESSONS UPON WHICH PESIKTA RABBATI'S DISCOURSES ARE BASED

Sabbath which falls on the New Moon,	Isa. 66:1-24 (Piska 1)
Hanukkah, first day,	Num. 7:1-17 (Piska 7)
Sabbath in,	Num. 7:1-8:5 (Piska 5); 1 Kings 18 (?) (Piska 4); Zeph. 1 (?) (Piska 8)
second Sabbath in,	1 Kings 7:40-51 (Piska 6)
eighth day,	Num. 7:54-59 (Piska 3)
eighth day,	Ps. 61 (?) (Piska 9)
each day,	Ps. 30 (?) (Piska 2)
Sabbath <i>Šekalim</i> ,	Exod. 30:11-16 (Piska 10); 1 Kings 4(?) (Piska 11)
Sabbath <i>Zakor</i> ,	Deut. 25:17-19 (Piska 12); Judg. 5 (?) (Piska 13)
Sabbath <i>Parah</i> ,	Num. 19:1-22 (Piska 14)
Sabbath <i>ha-Hodeš</i> ,	Exod. 12:1-20 (Piska 15)
Sabbath in first week of Nisan,	Num. 28:1 ff. (?) (Piska 16)
Passover, first day,	Exod. 12:21-51 (Piska 17), (Piska 49)
first day,	Lev. 22:26 ff. (?) (Piska 48)
second day,	Lev. 23:9-14 (?) (Piska 18)
seventh day,	Exod. 13:17-15:26 (Piska 19)
Pentecost on Sabbath,	Deut. 14:22-(?) (Piska 25)
First of the three Sabbaths preceding Ninth of Ab,	Jer. 1 (Piska 26)
Second of the three Sabbaths pre- ceding Ninth of Ab,	Jer. 2:4-28; 3:4 (Piska 27)
Sabbath preceding Ninth of Ab,	Jer. 37 (?) (Piska 27/28)
Ninth of Ab,	Lam. (Piska 29); Ps. 137 (?) (Piska 28)
Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Isa. 40 (Piska 29/30B)
Second Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Isa. 49:14-51:3 (Piska 31)
Third Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Isa. 54:1-10 (Piska 32)
Fourth Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Isa. 51:12-52:12 (Piska 33)

Fifth Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Zech. 9 (Piska 34)
Sixth Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Zech. 2 (Piska 35)
Seventh Sabbath after Ninth of Ab,	Isa. 60:1-22 (Piska 36)
Sabbath <i>Way-yelek</i> (when New Year's Day falls on Monday and Tuesday),	Isa. 61:10-63:9 (Piska 37)
New Year's Day,	Gen. 21:1-34 (Piska 42); Lev. 23:24 (?) (Piska 40); 1 Sam. 1:1-2:10 (Piska 43), (Piska 46); Joel 2 (?) (Piska 41)
Sabbath of Repentance,	Hos. 14:2-10 (Piska 44); (Piska 50)
Day of Atonement,	Lev. 16:1-34 (Piska 47); Ps. 32 (?) (Piska 45)
Tabernacles, first day,	Lev. 23:40 (Piska 51)
Eighth Day Festival,	Num. 29:35 ff. (Piska 52)
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(pr. means preamble)

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llizur (glh šur)	20.4 n.43
nno (ginnuno)	5.5
llah (goleh, golah)	8.4 n.23
(go'alah)	8.4 n.25
vz (gwzz)	11.2
dar (ha-dir)	51.2
rim (horim)	15.7 n.43
nḵ (hwnḵ)	25.2 n.7
ṗared (pirdah)	3.3
še'tiḵa (huše'tiḵa)	21.22 n.131

<i>hps</i> (<i>hps</i>)	8.2 n.5, 8.3, 8.4
<i>hsh</i> (<i>hisah</i>)	40.6
<i>hšyb</i> = "brought back" (<i>mšyb</i> = "caused to blow")	51.5
<i>htym</i> (<i>ht'ym</i>)	10.3
' <i>im</i> (' <i>om</i>)	35.1 n.2
Jerusalem (<i>yr' šlwm</i>)	29/30A.3
<i>kappot</i> (<i>kafut</i> , <i>kofin</i>)	51.2
<i>kazab</i> (' <i>akzab</i>)	32.1 n.3
' <i>kḅ</i> (' <i>ayin 70 + kof 100 + bet 2 = 172</i>)	21.12 n.70
<i>kbdym</i> (<i>kḏym šl mym</i>)	12.8 n.62
<i>kēbašim</i> (<i>kabbāšim</i> , <i>kabbasim</i>)	16.7, 48.3
<i>kšrym</i> (<i>kšwšrym</i>)	30.4 n.11
<i>kltw</i> (<i>kallat</i>)	5.5
<i>krk bdrk</i> (<i>kr'k bd'rky</i>)	12.13
<i>ksh</i> (<i>kšwy</i> , <i>škḥ</i> , <i>mškḥ</i>)	39.2
<i>k't hyh</i> (<i>mhyh</i>)	6.5 n.27
<i>kwr'</i> (<i>kwrh</i>)	12.11
<i>kyrk</i> (<i>kr</i>)	12.13
<i>lē'aṭ</i> (lamed 30 + 'alef 1 + tet 9 = 40)	16.6
<i>lēḅaḅ</i> (<i>leḅ</i>)	41.4
<i>lehi</i> (<i>luah</i>)	20.1 n.2
<i>lēriḅ</i> (<i>lēraḅ</i>)	22.4
<i>lh</i> (<i>l'</i>)	29/30A.1 n.7
<i>lk</i> (lamed 30 + kaf 20 = 50)	12.11
<i>lmnšh</i> (<i>neṣaḥ</i> , <i>nišṣuaḥ</i>)	9.3
<i>lrwḥ</i> (<i>lrwwh</i>)	40.2
<i>l'šy</i> (<i>lēmaḏ me-iššay</i>)	48.3 n.17
Mahol (<i>maḥālah</i>)	14.9
<i>marde'a</i> (<i>moreh de'ah</i>)	3.2
<i>masmeroṭ</i> (<i>mišmarot</i>)	3.2
<i>mazeḡ</i> (<i>mozeḡ</i>)	10.2 n.22
<i>malmaḏ</i> (<i>mēlammed</i>)	3.2
<i>mehemmah</i> (<i>mehummaḥ</i>)	3.2
<i>mē'oḏ</i> (<i>mo'eḏ</i>)	16.7 n.45
<i>mhllw</i> (<i>m'llw</i>)	43.5 n.19
<i>mi</i> (= 50 [myriads])	3.4
<i>migdēloṭ</i> (<i>mēgaddēloṭ</i>)	20.1 n.2
<i>miḵra'</i> (<i>mēḵora'</i>)	40.5 n.25
<i>minni</i> (<i>minwṭ</i>)	13.6 n.28
Miriam (<i>mrr</i>)	15.11
<i>mlkt</i> (<i>ml'kt</i>)	31.2 n.6
<i>mll</i> (<i>mlylh</i>)	43.4
Monbaz (<i>baz mammon</i>)	25.2 n.13
Moriah (<i>mora'</i> , <i>yir'ah</i> , <i>hora'ah</i> , <i>mrh</i> , <i>mor</i> , <i>mar</i> , <i>yrh</i>)	40.6

<i>mšy</i> (<i>mmš, mwš</i>)	33.10
<i>mthlk</i> (<i>mt hlk</i>)	40.2
<i>Mykh</i> (<i>Mukkeh</i>)	29/30A.5 n.23
<i>Nahshon</i> (<i>Nahshol</i>)	7.6
<i>Nhšlym</i> (<i>nh šl, nhšl</i>)	12.13 n.106, 107
'nky (nun 50 + kaf 20 = 70, yod = 10)	21.12
'nky ('ny ntty ktby)	21.12 n.65
<i>Nmšy</i> (<i>Mnšy</i>)	3.5 n.81
<i>nof</i> (<i>nymfē, 'nf, hnfh</i>)	41.2
<i>nskyhm, wnskyh, kmšpīm</i> (<i>mym</i>)	52.6
<i>nšwy</i> (<i>nšwy</i>)	45.3
'omen ('ēmunah)	12.8 n.70
<i>paršez</i> (<i>perai, šaddai, zyw</i>)	20.4 n.45
<i>paru'a</i> (<i>šaru'a</i>)	7.7 n.45
<i>pd'hw</i> (<i>pš'hw</i>)	10.9
<i>pkwym</i> (<i>pikkuḏim</i>)	10.12 n.85
<i>prt</i> (<i>pr' 'yn</i>)	12.5 n.53
<i>pšr</i> (<i>prš</i>)	14.10
<i>Ramathaim</i> (<i>mathaim</i>)	43.6 n.22
<i>Remim</i> (= Romans)	17.8
<i>Rephidim</i> (<i>rḥ ydym</i>)	12.5
<i>roḏem</i> (<i>roḏ-yam</i>)	7.6
<i>ršh</i> (<i>srh</i>)	24.1 n.1
<i>ršph</i> (<i>rš ph</i>)	11.2 n.16, 33.3
<i>Sbt</i> (<i>š'bdy</i>)	18.2 n.21, 53.2 n.10
š'wt (šade 90 + bet 2 + 'alef 1 + waw 6 + taw 400 = 499)	21.8 n.53
<i>šdk</i> (<i>sdyk</i>)	15.24 n.128
<i>šēbi'i</i> (<i>šēbu'a'a</i>)	40.6
<i>šedek</i> (<i>Šedek</i>)	20.2 n.22, 53.2
<i>šeh</i> (<i>Greek sy</i>)	40.6
<i>šēlamim</i> (<i>šēlemim</i>)	5.4 n.46
<i>Sheshbazzar</i> (<i>ba' shesh zar</i>)	6.3
<i>šhk</i> (<i>šhk</i>)	16.4
<i>shr</i> (<i>škr, šhr</i>)	10.2
<i>šikkēl</i> (<i>šikkēl, maškil</i>)	3.4
<i>šillaḥti</i> (<i>šullaḥti</i>)	8.4 n.24, 28.2 n.17
<i>šinē'an</i> (<i>šenna'in</i>)	21.8
(<i>šēnunim</i>)	21.8 n.45
(<i>šēnu'in</i>)	21.8 n.49
<i>škh</i> (<i>khš</i>)	21.17 n.91
<i>šlh</i> (<i>šlh yd</i>)	19.1
<i>šlh</i> (<i>šl</i>)	46.1
<i>šlmwt</i> (<i>s' lmwt</i>)	23.8
<i>šlwm</i> (<i>šlwš myl</i>)	49.5 n.13
<i>šn'n</i> (<i>s'nn</i>)	21.7 n.37
(<i>š'mrw n'šh wnyšm'</i>)	21.7 n.40

(š'yinn)	21.8 n.44
šoḇa' (šeḇa')	51.4
šoḇannim (šeḇonim)	20.1 n.2
šph (mšphh)	31.7 n.19
šr (šwr)	17.8, 49.9
šr (šwrh)	38 n.3
š'rh (š'rh)	32.2 n.5
š'rh = "whirlwind" (š'rh = "hair")	47.3
šsf (sr, šr, srs)	12.13
stw (syṭ, t'h)	15.14/15 n.81
šwr (šr)	13.2
šwr (šyyr)	24.2 n.9
swr (twr)	49.4 n.7
ta'isu (tin'aṣu)	28.2 n.15
talpiot (tel pēniyyot, lpny)	33.1
tammaṭi (tē'omaṭi)	15.6
teḇaḥ (tabbaḥ)	15.25 n.138
'tḥ ('tḥym)	51.5
tḥ (tḥ = ṣḥ)	31.7 n.20
tḥblwt (ḥbylwt, ḥoḇel)	47.4
tirgalti (tarti, riggalti)	3.4
tn'f (thnh 'f)	24.2 n.4
(tn 'f)	24.2 n.5
Tophet (ptḥ)	41.3 n.14
'tr ('tyrth)	11.3, 51.5
tšy (tšš)	24.2 n.9, 33.11 n.55
ttymrw (hmr)	29/30B.4
twr (tyyr)	15.11-15.14/15
twrh (taw 400 + waw 6 + reš 200 + he 5 = 611)	22.3
wayēhi (way = Aramaic "woe")	5.9 n.71
wayyēḥaleḳ (wayyāḥālōḳ)	17.4 n.18
wḏglw (waw 6 + daleṭ 4 + gimel 3 + lamed 30 + waw 6 = 49)	21.6 n. 28
wē'al (wal)	10.6
wḳp'wn (yḳp'wn)	14.13
wiślm (wthy ślm)	6.4
(ślmw)	6.7
'wyb ('ywb)	29/30A.7
wy'd (waw 6 + yod 10 + 'ayin 70 + daleṭ 4 = 90)	33.9
"ydk ('dy)	33.10
("dyk)	29/30A.3 n.11
('d)	29/30A.3 n.12
(y'd)	29/30A.3 n.13, 33.11
yiškēnu (yaškīnu)	5.7 n.63
yrd (rdh)	13.2
yšhk (yś' hk)	6.5 n.24

<i>yšrym</i> (<i>yšr'l</i>)	10.1 n.11
<i>yšwn'</i> (<i>yšwnh</i>)	14.10
<i>ytrwn</i> (<i>'šrwn</i>)	18.1 n.5, n.7
Zedekiah (<i>sidduk had-din</i>)	27/28.1 n.5
<i>zēḥul</i> (<i>zibbul</i>)	6.2
Zion (<i>sywn</i>)	29/30A.3
<i>zḵn</i> (<i>zḥ šḵnh</i> [<i>ḥḵmh</i>])	51.2 n.12
<i>zḵrtny</i> (<i>zḵr</i>)	43.3
<i>zr'm</i> (<i>zrw'm</i>)	34.1